

Hitler's Third Reich – Issue 2

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HITLER'S

Third Reich

Volume
2

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HITLER'S Third Reich

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ADOLF HITLER was hardly what you would call a normal character. Possessed of demonic powers of persuasion, he could dominate even the strongest of personalities, persuading them to commit evils beyond belief. Yet

Hitler himself lived in constant fear of madness and death, and was a prey to quack doctors all his life. But what was he afraid of? Was it cancer, as he claimed? Was it madness or idiocy, which was common in Hitler's inbred Austrian peasant family? Or was it a sexual disease, caught in his youth, which was to warp and twist the future dictator's world view right up to his final madness?

The problem with finding out if Hitler was genuinely ill in addition to being a monstrously evil man is that he did not allow doctors to examine him fully, even when convinced that he had cancer. Hitler certainly feared he was dying. He confessed this to the Gauleiter of Hamburg in 1932, afraid to postpone the Nazi revolution because there was not time to wait until Hindenburg died. This morbid belief that he would not be around for long may have propelled him to war in 1939 and into the invasion of Russia less than two years later. Cancer preyed on Hitler's mind, driving him to exist on a diet of tasteless vegetarian gruel; and cancer provides a plausible inspiration for some of his more extreme views. He had watched his beloved mother succumb slowly and agonisingly to cancer, a ghastly business in which the pain was intensified by an experimental (and, as it turned out, bogus) treatment provided by a Jewish doctor.

But the sexual angle is just as plausible. Hitler certainly did not have a normal sex life. Many observers believed he was asexual: 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl's wife called him a neuter. Other sources, including 'Putzi'

Left: The last photos of Hitler show a very sick man – old, grey, unable to control the shaking of his limbs. Were these the symptoms of a man in the final, deadly stages of syphilis?



Above: Hitler's mesmeric public personality proved immensely attractive to women, but he showed no overt desire in taking advantage of the opportunities it gave him.

Did Hitler have Syphilis?

Adolf Hitler was responsible for some of the most evil crimes in history. But was he simply a monster, or were his crimes driven by a disease caught in his vagrant youth?



When in public, Hitler habitually covered his groin with his hands or his hat – as above with a group of wounded veterans or below while inspecting a building project with architect Albert Speer. Psychologists see this as Hitler's unconscious attempt to shield an area in which he had been found vulnerable. The gesture was so characteristic that a whole series of jokes about it did the rounds in wartime Germany – but carefully, making sure the Gestapo was not listening!



himself, suggest that Hitler indulged in vile perversions that drove his young mistress Geli to kill herself. The only certainty in this twilight world of rumour and innuendo is that Hitler, as a young man, did not date women. Neither did he do so as a mature man, although, once he achieved supreme power, some of the most beautiful women in German society offered themselves to him unconditionally. To resist such temptation, as Hitler did, raises several obvious questions about the Führer. One theory for his lack of interest, and an idea that might account for other facets of his warped character, is that Adolf Hitler was dying of syphilis.

VD in the trenches?

According to Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, there is some evidence that Hitler faced charges during his army days for having a venereal disease. This was considered a self-inflicted wound – a court-martial offence in wartime. He escaped by claiming that he had contracted the disease while still a civilian. His shyness both of doctors and sexual activity, and his lunatic rantings in the Berlin bunker in 1945 fuel speculation that the Führer had caught syphilis as a young man, and had not received effective treatment.

Syphilis is a sexually-transmitted

infection. The symptoms are extremely unpleasant, but they were curable even when Hitler was a young man, provided the disease was diagnosed in time. After about six weeks, the symptoms usually disappear, whether or not treatment has been received. They tend to come back with a vengeance several months later, but can dissipate on their own once again, with few obvious ill-effects.

But the disease is fatal. Left untreated, it can lie dormant for decades, but when it does return for a final time, the sufferer is doomed to die a nauseating death. It affects the whole body, but its effects on the brain are what is most recognisable in Hitler's behaviour.

The onset of tertiary syphilis is marked by a rapid degeneration of mental powers, allied to some familiar features of Hitler's latter years. Sufferers often become paranoid, sometimes in the extreme. They frequently develop delusions of grandeur. Their sense of reality becomes ever more detached, and they lose the thread of conversations, wandering off at a tangent unless forcefully brought back to the subject. Anyone wading through the transcripts of 'Hitler's Table Talk', lovingly recorded by the sycophantic Martin Bormann, is drawn to conclude that Hitler was the most dreadful bore. Are these are the ramblings of an ageing syphilitic?

Low Life in Vienna

Hitler in the twilight world

SYPHILIS was rife in the slums where Hitler lived in his Vienna days. It was an occupational hazard for prostitutes of either sex, and their clients' traditional antipathy to prophylactics exposed them to the same danger. Since few prostitutes lived long enough to develop tertiary syphilis, the final stages of the disease were better known among the upper classes. Its victims read like a roll call of European society in the 18th and 19th centuries – ironically one was Winston Churchill's father, Randolph.

Hitler was far more awkward in female company than most young men. He fantasised, but never acted. He was only slightly less gauche in male company – indeed the intensity of his few male friendships attracts the suggestion of latent homosexuality. So if he caught syphilis, it was probably during a rare venture into the physical, rather than the consequence of adolescent promiscuity. It is not impossible that he caught it while losing his virginity – which would go a long way to explaining his ambivalence to women. And what if his diseased partner was a Jew?

Hitler's speeches are peppered with references to the purity of blood. In *Mein Kampf*, 'parasite' is one of his favourite metaphors: Jews are parasites that dilute the master race by polluting the blood. He paints the process and consequences of miscegenation in sanguinary images that could

be drawn from a horror novel. He returns again and again to the theme of the dirty Jew ravishing the Aryan maiden, spelt out in lurid, almost pornographic detail. Is this a mirror image of what happened to him?

Right: Vienna after 1900 was a lively city, full of painters, musicians and others at the cutting edge of artistic culture. It was a world Hitler wanted to join.

Below: The artist's life involved a lot of time spent in cafes and bars. Could it be that the young Hitler sampled – and suffered from – the shadier side of the Bohemian lifestyle?



Most famous victims of syphilis contracted the disease through sex with a multitude of ill-chosen, if not inexpensive partners. Many continued to lead promiscuous lives after they were infected. But Hitler's sexual activity was so limited there remains almost no evidence of it at all. After 1933, he could have had practically any woman he wanted, indulged in the most deviant sex imaginable—and he would have been able to get away with it. He had total control of the media and the world's most feared secret police. Yet he contented himself with the provincial charms of the empty-headed Eva Braun, and even she was kept secret from all but his closest intimates. She

Left: The nearest Hitler had to a normal relationship with a woman was with his niece Geli. However, by the time she committed suicide there was little about the affair that was healthy.

confided to several friends that their relationship was seldom physical.

Hitler remains an enigma

The theory that Hitler suffered from syphilis must remain speculative. Tertiary syphilis would certainly account for his rapid physical deterioration from 1943-45, his loss of concentration, fear that his generals were plotting against him and final, complete divorce from reality by the time he descended into the Berlin bunker. Catching this ghastly sickness from an early, fumbling sexual encounter might have poisoned healthier minds than Hitler's, and it could give a secret reason for his sudden conversion to virulent anti-Semitism. But there is no concrete evidence. The syphilis theory must remain just one of many possible explanations for the enigma that was Adolf Hitler.



THE BODY FACTORY



If there was an ultimate evil at the heart of the Nazi death factories, it was the industrial process designed to turn millions of living human beings into corpses, and to dispose of them in a way which would leave no evidence for posterity.

THERE WAS A sign saying 'To disinfection'. The man I was with said 'here you see, they are bringing the children now.' They opened the door, threw the children in and closed the door. There was a terrible outcry as a member of the SS climbed onto the roof and did something. The crying went on for about ten minutes, then stopped. Prisoners opened the doors. Every body was contorted in agony. The bodies were loaded on to a cart and taken to a ditch – the next batch were already undressing. After that, I didn't look at my wife for a month."

The testimony of SS Private Böck, given after the war, showed that even the SS were not immune to what they were doing at Auschwitz. But although

some may have had qualms, very few refused to take part in the most horrifying crime ever committed.

After going through the selection process on the ramp at Birkenau, those who were to die were told that they would have to be deloused before being moved

"Shouts and screams could be heard through the gas vents, and it was clear that the victims were fighting for their lives. The shouts stopped after a few minutes"

**SS Doctor
Johannes Kremer**

into the main camp. In the early days they were told to undress behind some bushes. Later, with the commissioning of larger facilities, they undressed in a large room adjacent to the 'showers'.

Once undressed, the victims were herded into the windowless gas chambers – chivvied on their way by guard dogs to the accompaniment of a hail of blows from the SS guards. The two original bunkers used at Auschwitz could hold about 800 and 1200 people respectively. Once inside, the doors were sealed shut, and poison gas was introduced.

The gas chambers were opened after 30 minutes and gas-mask-equipped teams of prisoners known as *Sonderkommandos* were sent in to remove the bodies. In the yard, gold teeth, jewellery and female

hair was removed. Another team loaded the bodies onto a narrow-gauge rail trolley, which was manhandled to deep burial pits. There the corpses were buried in alternate layers with lime. After each use, the gas chambers were hosed down and whitewashed.

POISON GAS

The substance used to massacre millions was called Zyklon-B. Originally manufactured as a disinfectant and delousing compound by the giant chemical firm IG Farben, the licence to the substance had been purchased by the Frankfurt firm of Degesch, which provided the SS with more than two tons a month.

Zyklon-B is a crystalline form of Hydrocyanic acid, also known as Prussic acid. The crystals begin to evaporate at 27 degrees C, giving off a lethal vapour which in concentrations of 300

The main gate and guard house at Auschwitz II still stands as a memorial to the million or more helpless victims whose trains passed through its central passage. Known as the 'gate of death' to the prisoners in the camp, it led to a railway siding. This had been built in 1944 to simplify the selection and movement of victims from the cattle trucks to the gas chambers.



All Roads lead to Hell

Auschwitz, the nerve centre of the SS network of death



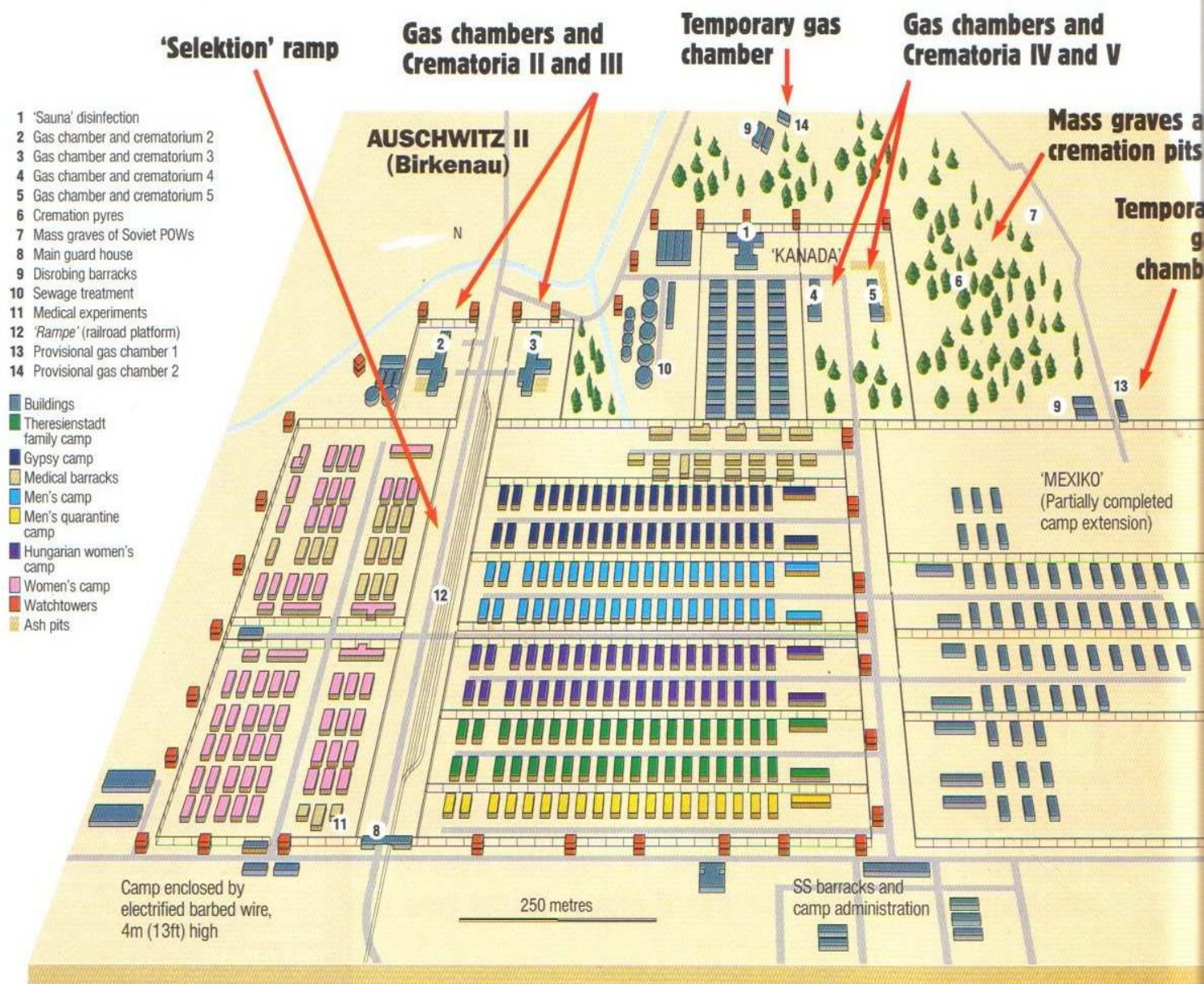
The decision to turn Auschwitz from a normal, if somewhat large concentration camp into the largest and most deadly of all the extermination camps lay with *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS.

In the summer of 1941 he summoned the Auschwitz commandant to Berlin. According to the autobiography he wrote in a Polish prison after the war, Rudolf Höss was told exactly what the future of Auschwitz was to be.

"The Führer has ordered the final solution to the Jewish question", Himmler said, "and we of the SS have been given the task. The existing liquidation methods in the east can not cope with the large operations expected in the future. I have therefore chosen Auschwitz for this purpose; first, because of its convenient location in terms of transportation, and second, because the site can be easily isolated and concealed."

This was at least six months before the Wannsee conference which is normally taken as the start of the *Endlösung* or final solution.

Left: Auschwitz lay at the heart of Europe's well-developed rail network, and from April 1943 to November 1944 it received transports from western Europe and Salonika as well as from the ghettos of eastern Europe.



ANATOMY OF A GENOCIDE CAMP

parts per million is fatal to humans in less than 15 minutes. In the hot, sweaty conditions of the packed gas chambers the temperature swiftly rose beyond the danger point, and the struggles of the victims only served to increase the circulation of the poison.

Early attempts at mass murder had used a variety of lethal agents, from carbon monoxide generated by truck exhausts to shooting. In September 1941, Auschwitz was a labour camp for Soviet prisoners of war under the command of Rudolf Höss. The standard method of disposing of prisoners was shooting, but SS

Hauptsturmführer Karl Fritsch thought of trying out the delousing poison already in use at Auschwitz to kill rats and other vermin.

On September 3rd, around 600 Russian prisoners and 250 sick inmates were packed into an underground detention cell. SS men in gas masks tipped out several canisters of Zyklon-B, left the room and sealed the doors. Concentrations were quite low, and the basement had not been heated to the required 27 degrees, so several prisoners were still alive the next day. However, it was clear that Zyklon-B was far more lethal

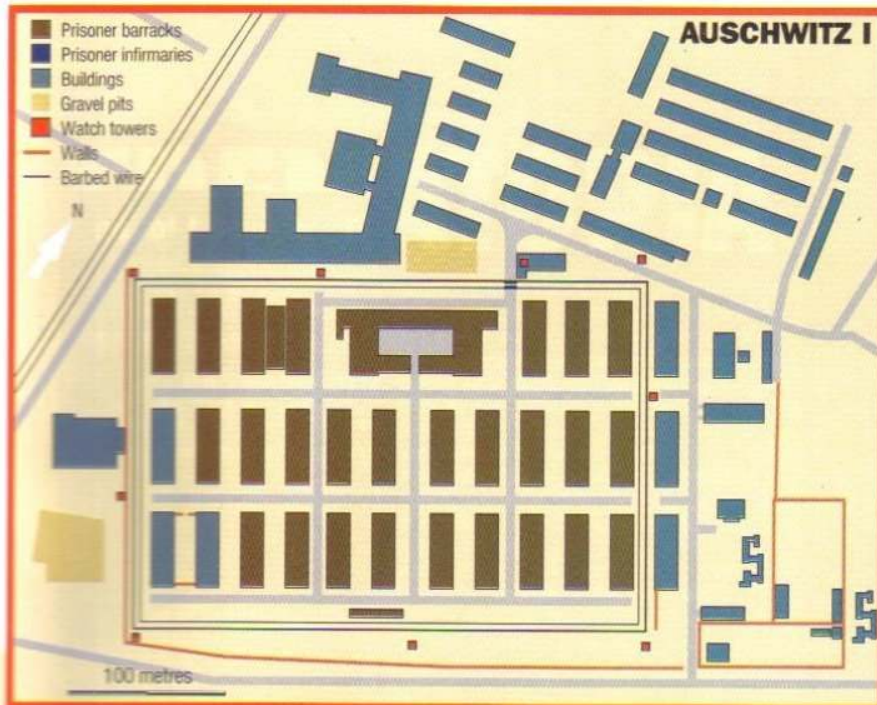
than other methods, and Höss recommended the technique to Adolf Eichmann, then head of the Nazi 'Office of Jewish Emigration'.

EARLY DAYS

The first gas chamber was built at Auschwitz I, and the first Jews – Slovaks, followed by Polish Jews from nearby Sosnowiec – were killed in April 1942. By this time, the 'Final Solution' was under way, and it was clear that the small gas chamber and crematorium at Auschwitz I – Krema I – did not have the capacity to kill in large enough numbers. Accordingly, the firm

of J.A.Topf and Sons was contracted to build a series of much larger gas chambers and crematoria at the nearby Birkenau/Auschwitz II labour camp. Four installations were completed, designated Kremas II, III, IV and V, and they became operational between March and June 1943.

Situated behind their own barbed wire fences, and screened from the rest of the camps by a *Grüngürtel* or 'green girdle' of trees and bushes, each of the facilities had three interlinked parts. The first two parts of Kremas II and III were underground and covered in turf,



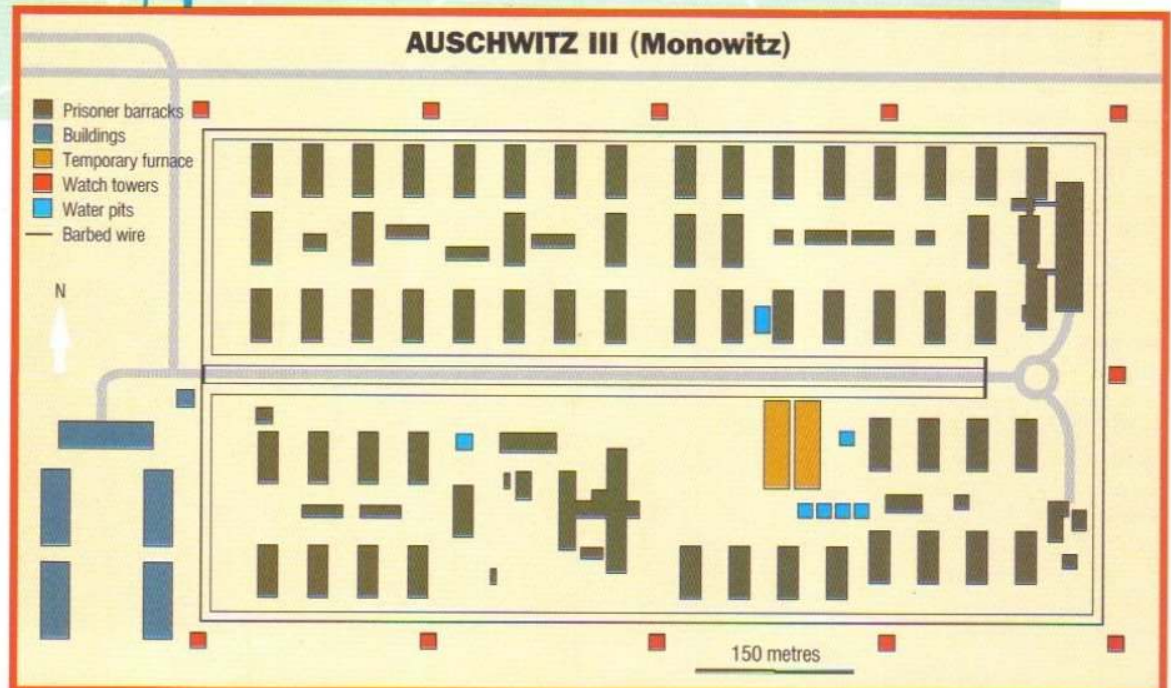
Auschwitz development zone

As the Auschwitz complex grew, so the Germans began to expel the local population from an area of more than 100 km² around the camp. Within this development zone the SS set up a number of sub-camps to provide labour for the industrial plants in the region. The majority of the 130,000 prisoners in the Auschwitz complex worked for SS industries. They produced food on SS farms, worked in SS cement factories and brickworks, and produced and repaired military equipment in the SS armaments factories. Smaller in number, but more important to the war effort were the prisoners who worked for outside firms. The majority of these worked in the chemical industry, producing the synthetic rubber and fuel so vital to the German war effort, but large numbers were also worked to death in mines, steelworks and private armaments factories.



Monowitz/ Auschwitz III

One of the reasons for the setting up of Auschwitz III not far from the original camps was to provide the 10,000 workers necessary for the massive IG Farben synthetic rubber plant. Because it was primarily a labour camp, Auschwitz III also served as the administrative headquarters of the network of subcamps scattered all over the region.





Above: The original single crematorium at Auschwitz could not cope with even the normal death rate at a concentration camp. As a result, many of those murdered at Auschwitz in 1941 and early 1942 were buried in mass graves.

Below: The allies had aerial photos of Birkenau – usually taken during raids on the chemical factories at nearby Auschwitz III. However, they could not confirm the rumours about mass murder which had been circulating since 1943.

though to save costs in Kremas IV and V they were placed at ground level. The 390 m² 'dressing room' had wooden benches along the wall and was lined with numbered coat hooks. Windowless, it connected with the gas chamber via a 5 m passage.

The plastered and whitewashed gas chamber was 30 m long, 7 m wide and 2.4 m high, with concrete posts supporting the reinforced concrete ceiling. The edges of the door – 1.92 m high and 1 m wide – were covered in felt as was the door frame. A peephole in the door was made of two layers of 8-mm thick glass, sealed by rubber gaskets. Both chambers were mechanically ventilated.

The Zyklon-B was introduced via four pillar-like columns, 70-cm square. In Krema II they

were spaced evenly down the centre line of the chamber, while in Krema III they were mounted in pairs either side of the axis of the room.

The outer layer of the column was a wire mesh, with a second inner mesh column. Inside was a removable tin-covered core with a conical top. Pellets were dropped into the core, spreading out evenly on the cone and collecting at the bottom. Normally the heat of hundreds of bodies would have been enough to start the crystal vapourisation, though in cold weather iron braziers filled with red-hot coke were brought into the chamber. At his trial after the war, Höss described the process.

SPYING ON DEATH

"It could be seen from the door peephole that those closest to the induction columns died almost immediately – about a third dying that way. The rest staggered about and screamed and struggled for air. The screaming did not last long, however. It soon changed to the death rattle, and within minutes everybody lay still".

The main reason for the new

"Those closest to the column died almost immediately.... The rest staggered about screaming and struggling for air. The screaming didn't last long"

**Rudolf Höss
Auschwitz
commandant**

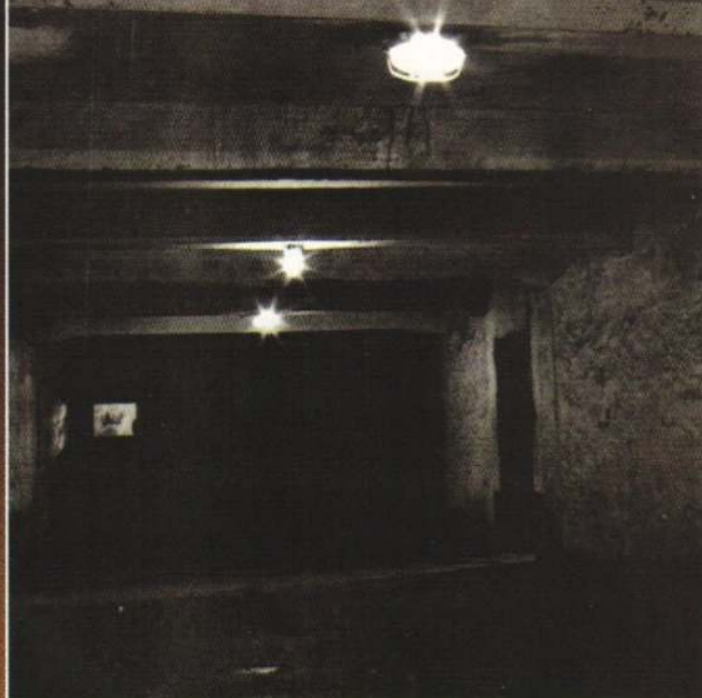
facilities was the difficulty of disposing of the bodies. At first, they were buried in vast trenches. But on 17 July 1942, *Reichsführer* SS Heinrich Himmler made an inspection visit, following the entire process from selection through gassing to the disposal of the bodies. Clearly he had some doubts about leaving evidence in the shape of mass graves, for shortly afterwards orders arrived to exhume all of the buried bodies, burn them and scatter the ashes.

The crematoria then in place could not handle the huge quantity of corpses. Accordingly,



GAS CHAMBERS AND CREMATORIA

The first gas chamber was in Auschwitz I, and had originally been the camp mortuary. It was an improvised site, and could not deal with the flow of bodies which arose out of the program of mass murder. The next gas chambers were also improvisations, but this time were located at the newly completed camp at Birkenau. The provisional gas chambers were converted farmhouses located in the woods to the west of the main camp. Provisional Gas Chamber 1 was known as the 'White House' and began operations in January 1942. Provisional Gas Chamber 2 was the 'Red House' which was used as a killing site from June 1942 until the autumn of 1944. Never considered more than stop-gaps, they only served until four purpose-built, industrial scale crematoria were completed between March and June 1943. A sixth crematorium was planned; this would have been a huge ring-shaped structure capable of incinerating hundreds of bodies at a time.



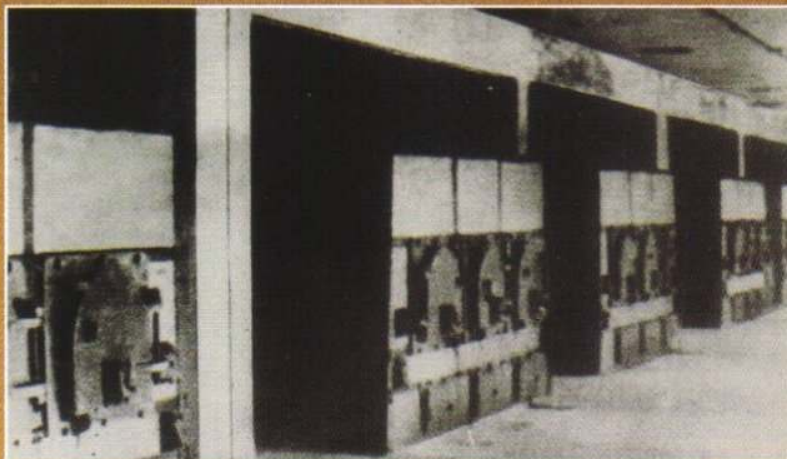
Above: One of the gas chambers at the original Auschwitz camp, which became known as Auschwitz I. According to Rudolf Höss, it could hold between 800 and 1100 people. Only used as a gas chamber for a brief period, it was later converted into an air-raid shelter.



Above: Among the evidence discovered at Auschwitz by the Soviets were human remains in the fireboxes. This was despite the fact that the SS had tried to destroy the crematoria.

Below: The undressing room and gas chamber at Kremas II and III were below ground: the visible part of the building was where the bodies were burnt. In the summer of 1944 the chimneys belched out smoke day and night, and the stench of burning flesh permeated the entire camp.

Below: The furnace room at Krema II. Each of the furnaces could incinerate between three and five corpses at a time – and it was not unknown for victims to be burned alive.





they were burned on huge timber pyres, 2,000 at a time. These pyres evolved into cremation pits, 30 metres long, 7 metres wide and 3 metres deep. Layers of bodies were alternated with layers of timber, and doused with inflammable liquid. Special cavities were dug to collect body fat, which was then used to stoke the fire. More than 100,000 corpses had been burned in this way by the end of November 1942.

However, even these cremation pits were not enough to cope with the incredible flow of human remains being generated by genocide. To deal with the problem, the SS contracted the firm of Topf and Sons to build the furnaces at the new crematoria. These were coke-fired, using three crucibles, or muffles, to take corpses. A forced draft system provided the air for combustion, and also extracted the combustion products through a tall chimney.

Close to the gas chambers in

"Outside were signs saying 'Baths' and 'Sauna'. Then they were taken to the *Entkleidungskammer*, or changing room. There was a chute for those with artificial limbs or who could not walk, with a slide that took them right into the changing rooms. To the side were benches, and hooks with numbers. The SS men would tell them to undress, but to remember their clothes hook number. People asked for water, as they were very thirsty after days in sealed freight cars. The SS men told them that coffee would be waiting at the camp, to hurry up into the showers since it was getting cold, and other such reassuring remarks. Naked they had to move down the left side to the gas chambers. In Krema 1 and Krema 2 the gas chamber could be divided in two. Sometimes there were not enough people to fill the whole space, and to save gas they used only one part."

Yehuda Backon, artist and Auschwitz survivor, reporting Sonderkommando eyewitness account at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Jerusalem, 1960

Kremas II and III were the elevators which connected to the furnace rooms on the ground floor. It took about 4 hours to empty the gas chambers, the corpses being delivered to the furnaces either on small trolleys or on special 'corpse stretchers' which were often greased with soap to allow the remains to be slid on and off more easily.

Krema II had five furnaces, each with three retorts that were used to push the bodies into the furnaces. Typically, three to four bodies were burned at a time. Earlier experiments had determined that the system which used the least amount of fuel was to cremate a well nourished adult with a malnourished adult and a child at the same time: once the bodies ignited they would burn without any further addition of coke. Topf had estimated that it would take about half an hour to dispose of a corpse, but the SS found that by forcing the performance of the furnaces they could burn three at a time in

Below: The door to the gas chamber was made from layers of wood sandwiching an impermeable membrane, and its edges were lined with layers of felt. A small peephole in the door was the only means of seeing into the gas chamber.



Below: The firm of Degesch sold the SS more than 20 tons of Zyklon-B in 1943 and 1944, most sales going through their agents Tesch/Stabinow.

BODY BURNING

Disposing of the evidence of mass murder

At its height, the four industrial-sized crematoria in the death complex at Birkenau had a total of 46 retorts, each with a capacity of burning three to five bodies at a time. Allowing some down time for cleaning and servicing, the crematoria could theoretically dispose of around 12,000 corpses a day. However, working at this rate strained the machinery, and breakdowns

were common. Indeed, in August 1944 when the slaughter of Hungarian Jews was at its height the murderers had to go back to the old method of outdoor cremation pits to cope with the flow of human remains.

The Germans pulled out of Auschwitz late in 1944, in the face of advancing Soviet armies and after the murder of more

than 1 million people.

The SS blew up the gas chambers and crematoria and burned down most of the *effektenlager* where they stored the loot stolen from their victims, but enough evidence remained to make it dreadfully clear what had happened in this place. Above all, it is the testimonies of the survivors which speak of the horror that was Auschwitz.



Above: Rail-mounted trollies transported corpses from the freight lifts connecting with the gas chamber. The trollies could also be used to load the bodies direct into the furnaces.

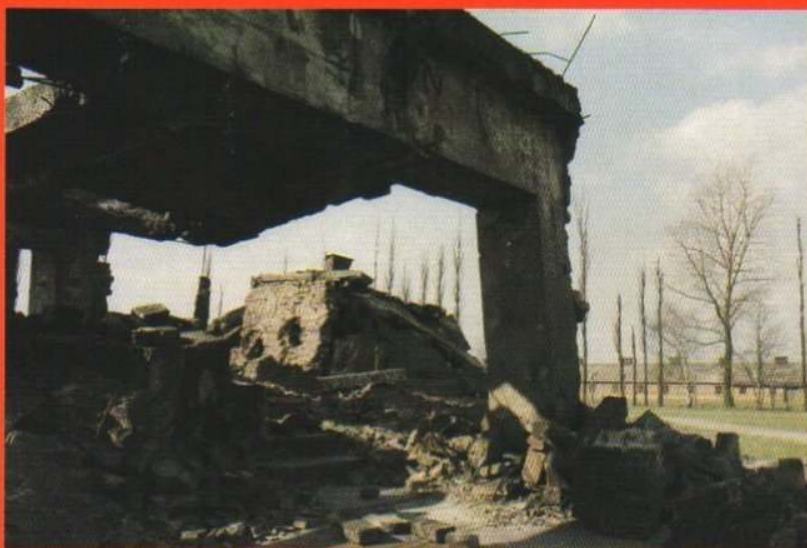
around 20 minutes, and four or even five in just over 30 minutes.

Johannes Kremer recalled two years after the war:

"I remember taking part in the gassing of a group from the women's camp. As they were wearing worn-out camp clothing of no value they were made to undress outside. They had no doubt of the fate which awaited them: they begged and sobbed the SS men to spare their lives. But they were herded into the gas chamber and gassed.

"As an anatomist I have had a lot of experience with dead bodies, but what I saw that day was like nothing I could ever have imagined. Still completely shocked, that night – 5 September 1942 – I wrote in my diary 'The most dreadful of horrors. *Hauptscharführer* Thilo was right – this the is *anus mundi*, the arsehole of the world'"

Kremer was an SS doctor who had conducted vivisection experiments on camp inmates. He was hanged after the 1947 'Doctors Trial'.



Above: Even though the crematoria had a theoretical capacity of incinerating between 8,000 and 12,000 bodies a day, in the summer of 1944 they had to be augmented by the open-air burning of bodies in pits.

Left: As the Red armies approached Auschwitz at the end of 1944, the SS blew up the gas chambers and crematoria in an attempt to conceal their ghastly crimes. This is the remnant of Krematorium II as it is today.



ONE OF THE key images of the Nuremberg Rallies is of massed ranks of Storm Troopers, SS men and Nazi Party officials framed by hundreds of red, white and black swastika banners, the whole assembly echoing to the roar of thousands of voices shouting "Sieg Heil".

The other abiding image is of Adolf Hitler's sweating face glistening in the stage lighting, holding his listeners spellbound

as he rants against Jews, Marxists, bolsheviks, pacifists, the Treaty of Versailles, the Weimar Republic, France and Soviet Russia.

This image was created in large part by Leni Riefenstahl's powerful film *Triumph des Willens* ('The Triumph of the Will') which recorded the 1934 rally. However, it does not reflect the modest beginnings of the annual Nazi party gatherings.

The rallies were known as *Parteitage* or Party Days. The first was held in Munich in 1923

and attracted 20,000 spectators and party members. The SA (*Sturmabteilung* or assault detachment) was on call for a modest parade. Briefly known on its foundation in 1921 as the party's 'Gymnastics and Sports Division', the SA was the Nazi paramilitary wing, intended to provide the movement with an offensive street fighting force.

At the urging of Julius Streicher, the second rally, in August 1923, was held at Nuremberg. This included a two hour parade by 80,000 Storm

Troopers and at the *Ausstellungshalle* (Exhibition Hall) Hitler gave the same speech four times to audiences of 2,000.

HITLER BANNED

For his part in the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch, Hitler served nine months of a five year sentence in Landsberg am Lech prison. Party membership was greatly reduced after the Putsch, and after his release Hitler was banned from political activity in most major cities, so the next rally in Weimar was not held until July 1926.

NUREMBERG RALLIES

Below: Adolf Hitler addresses more than a quarter of a million followers at the 1933 rally – the first after the Nazis came to power.



This was the first rally to be called a *Parteitag*. It began on July 3 and ended at noon the following day. The *Blutfahne* ceremony was held in secret. Special committees were established to attract youth, labour and women to the Party, and the meeting marked the emergence of Dr Joseph Goebbels as a major personality.

The fourth rally, at Nuremberg in August 1927 was still quite a modest affair, though it lasted for three days. Hitler was now free from his political ban, and the

Blutfahne ceremony was held in public. The highlight of this rally was a torchlight parade through the narrow medieval streets of the city. This rally saw another new name come to the fore with the prominent appearance of Heinrich Himmler.

PARTY SPECTACULAR

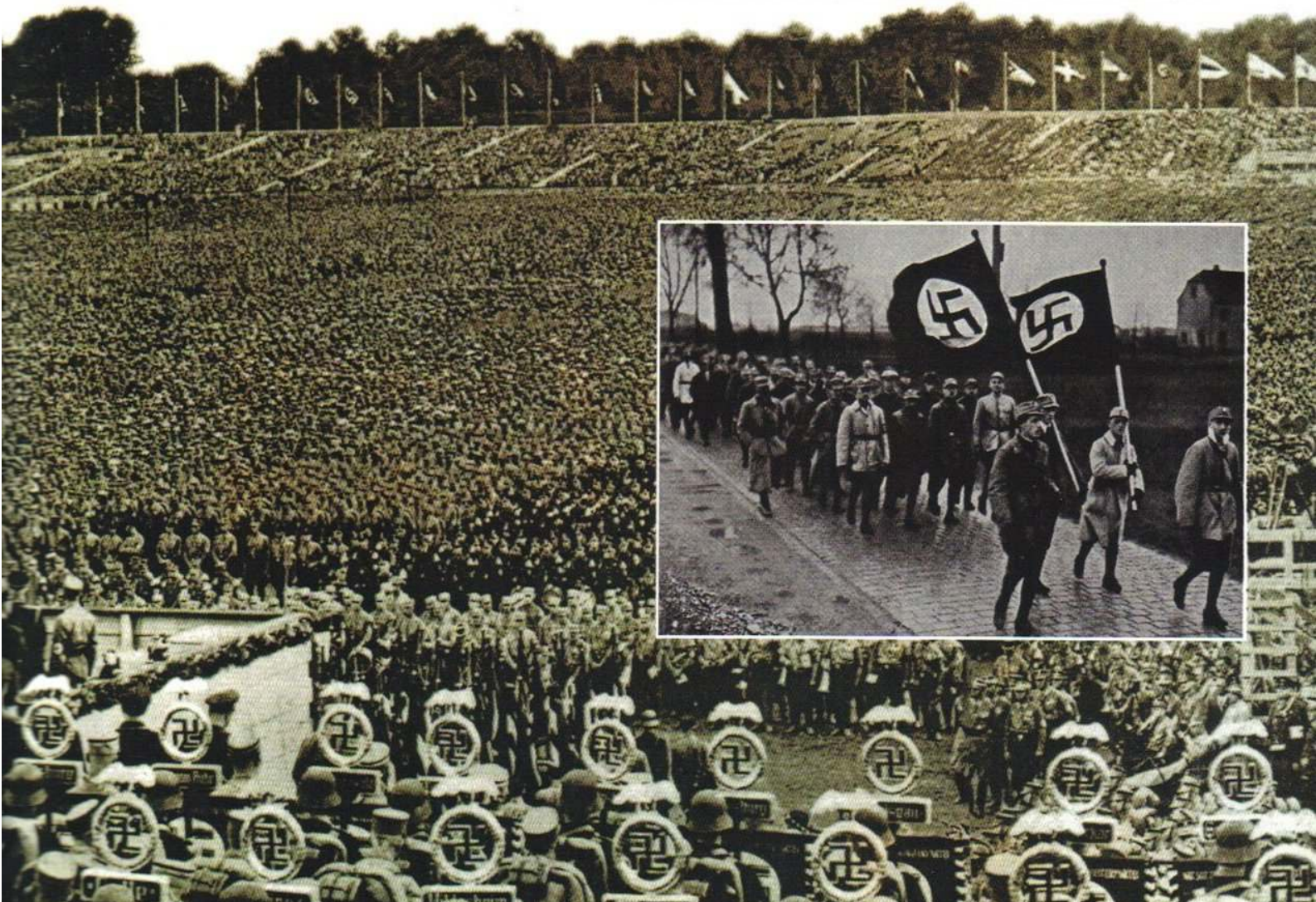
The depression saw Party membership on the rise again, and the rally between August 2 and 5, 1929 was the first truly spectacular event. The theme was 'composure'. All the major

The incredible spectacles which took place at Nuremberg have gone down in history as the definitive pre-war face of the Third Reich.



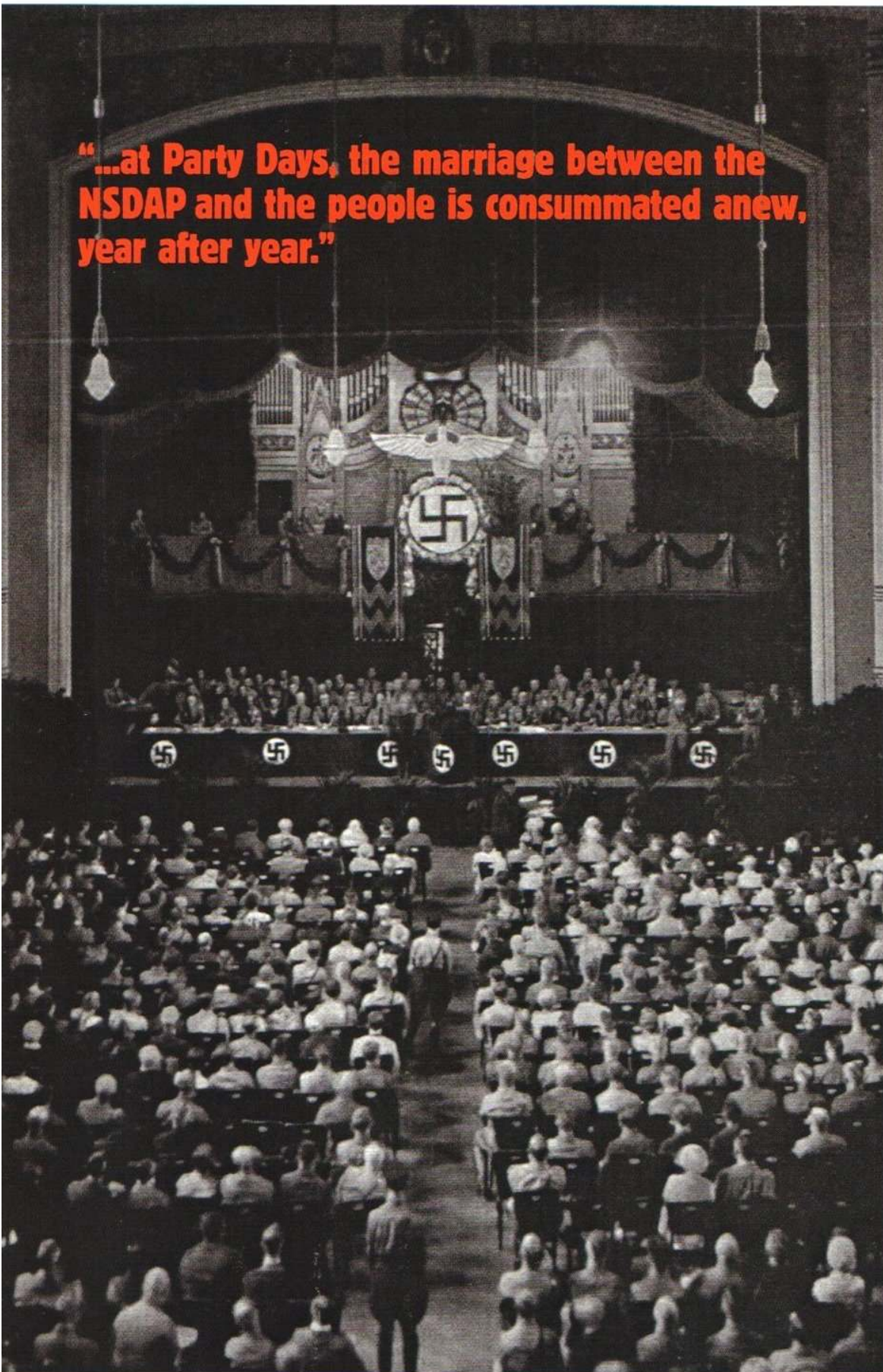
Above: Hitler salutes the SA as they march past during the 1927 rally. This was the fourth such occasion, and was still a relatively modest affair – at least by the standards of Party Days to come.

Below inset: The first real party rally took place in Munich in January 1923, 11 months before the Nazi attempt to seize power. Highlight of the event was a parade by the paramilitary SA.





"...at Party Days, the marriage between the NSDAP and the people is consummated anew, year after year."



buildings in the city, including the *Kulturvereinhaus* (House of Culture) and the huge open spaces of the *Zeppelinwiese* and *Luitpoldhain* were used. More than 2,000 delegates assembled to hear speeches from Hitler, Goebbels and Streicher. There were athletes with burning torches, the formation of human swastikas and dazzling fireworks.

To celebrate Hitler's assumption of power, the rally in 1933 was called the 'Congress of Victory'. Numbers attending had increased still further, and the logistic effort to house and feed half a million Nazis required the requisitioning of churches, factories and public buildings as well as assembling tented villages with field kitchens.

**"Swastika on our helmet,
black-white-red
armband,
Sturm abteilung
Hitler is our
name"**

**Early SA
Fighting Song**

In May that year the successful young architect Albert Speer undertook the design work on a rally at Tempelhof Field in Berlin, and his use of massed flags and special lighting effects would become a feature of future rallies. Recognising his talent Hitler commissioned him in 1934 to design the party rally grounds at Nuremberg.

The 1934 rally at Nuremberg lasted from September 3 to 10. Former actress turned director

Left: Two thousand senior delegates gather in Nuremberg's Kulturvereinhaus to hear Hitler, Goebbels and others speak during the 1929 rally. After a period in isolation, party membership was again growing, and the annual party days were becoming more and more spectacular.

Consecration of the banners

Touched with the blood of martyrs: the *Blutfahne*

A KEY FEATURE of all Party Rallies was the appearance of the *Blutfahne*, or Blood Banner. Probably the most revered symbol in the Third Reich, the *Blutfahne* was one of the flags used during the abortive Munich Putsch of 1923. Carried by Heinrich Trambauer as the Nazis clashed with state police in Odeon Square, it was spattered with the blood of Andreas Bauriedl who was one of 16 men killed during the rising. Regarded as a holy relic, it was placed in the keeping of the SS in 1926, and Jakob Grimminger was appointed standard bearer. Grimminger was a veteran of both World War I and of street fights with the communists, and would remain in his position as standard bearer until the Blood Banner disappeared at the end of the war.

The *Blutfahne* was displayed at all major Nazi ceremonials, the most prominent of which was the 'consecration' of the

Feldzeichen or banners of newly-formed SA units and SS *Standarten*. These almost invariably took place during the annual Nuremberg party rallies.

In a ritual which resembled the blessing of military colours in Christian armies, Hitler acted like a high-priest. Holding the Blood Banner in one hand and the new standard as the other, he acted as the medium by which the magic of one sacred symbol was transmitted to the other. By holding the two flags in contact for a few seconds, the *Blutfahne* made a 'mystic' connection between the new Nazi units and the fighters and martyrs of the early days of the movement.

This ritual would remain one of the most important of all the Nuremberg ceremonies, and would be extensively recorded on photographs and in film.

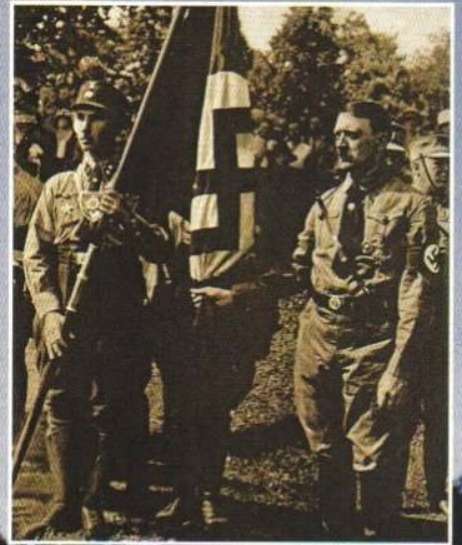


Above: The first four party *Feldzeichen* or battlefield standards are paraded on Munich's Marsfeld in 1923.



Left: Hitler consecrates new *Feldzeichen* in a quasi-religious ceremony by touching them with the *Blutfahne*.

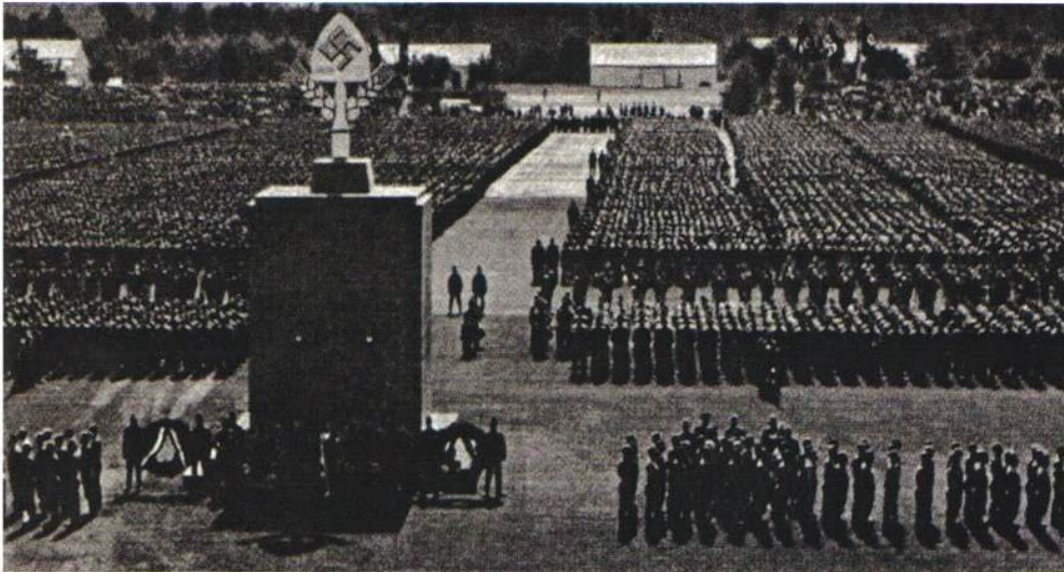
Right: The *Blutfahne* was in the keeping of the SS, and was carried till its disappearance at the end of the war by Jakob Grimminger.



Below: The four original standards were the first of many; each represented a regiment-sized *Standarte* of the SS or the SA.



INSIDE THE THIRD REICH



Above: From 1934 the Reich Labour Service played an important role at Nuremberg: this is the 'Army of Labour' on parade at the 1935 rally.

Right: Members of the Motorised SA pass through the ancient streets of Nuremberg. After the 1934 rally this organisation became the NSKK (Nationalsozialistische Kraftfahrerkorps or Nazi motor corps)

Below: Although vastly outnumbered by the SA, the black-shirted SS was to become much more influential in National Socialist Germany.



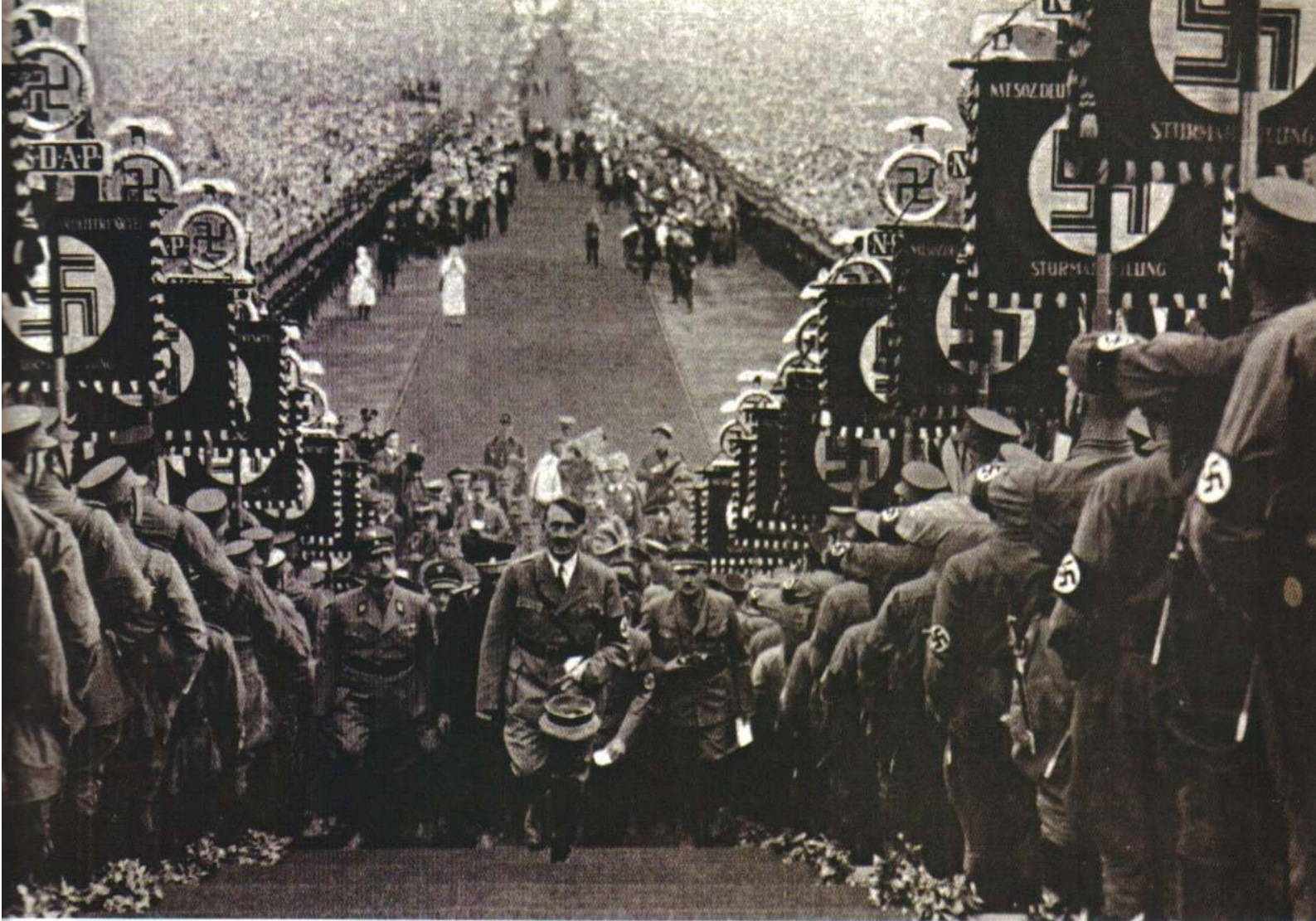
Leni Riefenstahl deployed 30 cameramen and had special trackways and elevators built to produce dramatic shots of the rally. The film which emerged is probably the most powerful piece of propaganda ever created. It turned Hitler into a Wagnerian hero, arriving by aircraft through towering clouds. Riefenstahl's memorable images included massive torchlight processions, the unfurling of 21,000 flags and the sight of 50,000 men of the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* standing with their shovels glittering in the sun. 'Triumph of the Will' received a National State Prize, the gold medal of the Venice Film Festival and a Grand Prix of the French government at the Paris Film Festival.

ANTISEMITIC LAWS

Hitler took the opportunity of the 1935 rally to present the Nuremberg Laws on race and citizenship. Directed primarily at the Jews, they made clear to the rest of the world the true character of the new German government. For the first time the armed forces paraded tanks, armoured cars and aircraft.

In 1936 in a rally with the theme 'Honour and Freedom' there were more military parades. A year later in a ranting speech Hitler told his audience that the Third Reich would "last for a thousand years".

The final and greatest Nuremberg rally was held from September 5 to 12, 1938. Each day was dedicated to a separate theme: Welcome, Congress of Labour, Fellowship, Politics, Youth, Storm Troopers, and finally the Armed Forces. The rally incorporated all the accumulated experience of past years with parades, banners, reviews, speeches, torchlight processions and fireworks. Over one million people attended and hundreds of reporters from throughout the world covered an event which seemed like a triumph, but was in reality the requiem for the Reich.



Left: Nuremberg was not the only site of major Nazi occasions: here Hitler addresses a political meeting at Brunswick during the Party's expansion in the years before coming to power.

Above: Hitler ascends the Bückeberg through tens of thousands of farming families. Shorn of all Christian symbolism, the annual Nazi harvest festival took place a month after the Parteitag.

Below: Hitler inspects the ceremonial guard drawn from the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, the elite SS formation which grew out of the Führer's original SS bodyguard squads of the 1920s.





Slave Labour

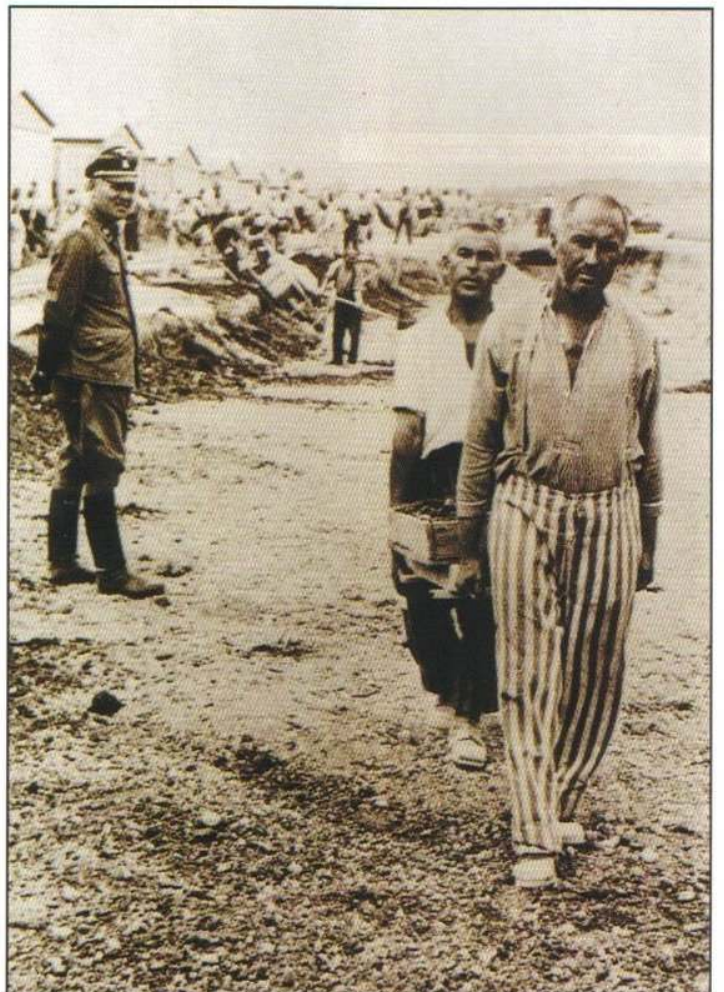
“Foreign workers are to be exploited to the highest possible extent at the lowest conceivable degree of expenditure.”

**Directive from Fritz Sauckel
Plenipotentiary-General for the mobilisation of labour**



Above: German soldiers round up Ukrainian women on the streets of Kiev. Most will work on the land or in German factories.

Below: A work-gang of prisoners from the concentration camp at Dachau labour on a project to improve drainage near the camp.



Hitler called it *Teufelswerk* – devil’s work. It was the ruthless plundering of eastern Europe, exploitation so thorough that the population itself was treated as just another resource to be seized and used.

The Nazis turned the clock back two thousand years, rounding up civilians in the conquered nations and forcing them to work on the land, in German factories or in the mines.

Germany faced a mounting shortage of military personnel, and any measure that released able-bodied men to the armed forces made strategic sense. Yet in typical Nazi fashion, brutality proved to be inefficient. The slave labourers seized and transported to the Reich were treated so cruelly that they died by the thousand. More had to be obtained, and large numbers of SS and army units were used to capture them – with decreasing success as German terror methods depopulated Polish and Russian villages. Soon, they were only capturing those too young or too old to flee.

Poland was the first victim, regarded as no more than a labour pool. Hans Frank, the

Nazi governor-general, demanded one million Polish workers including 750,000 agricultural labourers, half of them women.

The seizures began on a small scale, detaining audiences in cinemas, or arriving outside a church to arrest all able-bodied people leaving the service. Soon, however, convoys of army trucks entered villages at dawn, grabbing people at random.

Polish resistance

The Poles struck back as best they could, assassinating the head of the labour office in Warsaw, but nothing could stop the deportation of 4 million people between 1939 and 1941. The majority were put to work on German farms, parcelled out in ones and twos to family holdings where their treatment varied from thuggish indifference to vicious savagery.

The invasion of Russia offered the Nazis an apparently inexhaustible supply of slave labour. The majority of the estimated seven million slaves seized by the Germans during the war came from Russia and the Ukraine. Yet the most obvious source of slave workers – the hordes of Soviet prisoners taken in the first year of the war – was

RED POWs

Well over three million prisoners of war were taken by the Germans during the first seven months of fighting on the Russian front. The majority of them were fit young men. But the German army high command decreed that these soldiers had forfeited all rights and were not to be treated as normal prisoners-of-war. Herded into camps that were often no more than barbed wire enclosures in the open, they were left to face the Russian winter in conditions of unimaginable horror. There was no food, shelter or medical aid. Epidemics of typhus and dysentery followed. Stories of cannibalism were so commonplace that Hermann Göring joked, "now they've eaten a

sentry, which really is going too far."

By February 1942 more than half the prisoners were dead, and most of the survivors were in such poor health that they were unable to work. To put the treatment of these prisoners into perspective, the death rate among Allied prisoners taken by the Japanese – including those on the Bataan death march and the notorious Burma railway – was about 40 per cent. The death rate of Russians held by the Germans was over 60 per cent. Once it was decided to put the surviving inmates of the prison camps to work, they were shipped to German factories, held in barracks and worked to death.



overlooked until it was too late to make any difference.

BBC correspondent Alexander Werth spent most of the war in the USSR, and was with the Red Army when it re-captured Kharkov in early 1943. After 18 months of German occupation, the population had shrunk by two thirds. Although perhaps a third of the people had fled in 1941, Werth established that nearly 100,000 young men and women had been deported to Germany as forced labourers. Thirty thousand were spared the life of slavery: all the Jews and communist party members were shot within weeks of the German take-over.

Every *ostarbeiter* had his or her own story, but when Alexander Werth interviewed a number of Ukrainian survivors, he discovered a grim consistency running through their experiences. Dragged from their homes during the night, or seized in their places of work, the young women he spoke to were taken by train in cattle trucks to

Right: Forced labourers build anti-tank defences on the French frontier as a farming family heads into the fields. Most of the people used in such work were recruited in occupied countries. They were promised good pay and conditions – promises which were never kept.

barrack-type buildings on factory sites in Germany.

They worked nine hour shifts for which they were paid the token sum of 1.2 marks a week – although factory managers would make their own 'deductions' so few of them saw more than a pfennig or two. They were fed pitifully inadequate rations: two spoonfuls of boiled turnip with a slice of bread for breakfast and a couple of baked potatoes and ersatz coffee (made from roasted acorns) in the evening. Many

Right: Roll-call is taken at Sachsenhausen camp near Berlin before the work day begins in the local armaments factories. The hundreds of thousands of prisoners in the camp system were the largest pool of cheap labour available to the Nazis.

SS ACCOUNTING VALUE OF A CONCENTRATION CAMP SLAVE LABOURER

Life expectancy	9 months (c. 273 days)
Revenue from labour	6 Reichsmarks per day
Gross Profit from labour	1638 RM
Deductions for accommodation/food	60 pfennigs per day
Net Profit from labour	(164 RM)
Average value of possessions confiscated on arrival at camp (money, valuables, clothes) plus any dental gold extracted after death	1474 RM
Total admitted profit	200 RM
Not included in SS figures: Bones and ash (used as fertiliser), hair (from females only) and body fat (used to fuel crematoria, saving on energy costs)	1674 RM
Value	c.20 RM
TOTAL VALUE OF A SLAVE'S LIFE:	1694 RM
Average weekly wage in Germany in 1939 was around 40 RM – \$20 or £5 at pre-war exchange rates	
A litre of milk cost 17 pfennigs	
Six eggs cost 72 pfennigs	
500 grams of beef cost 85 pfennigs	
Typical weekly rent for a three-room flat was around 10 RM	





Left: Newly-shorn women prepare for work at Birkenau. The Auschwitz complex was more than a death camp – it was also one of the largest labour camps, providing workers for much of the heavily industrialised area of upper Silesia.



Above: Auschwitz inmates were used to build the facilities for their own destruction. Here, prisoners pour the concrete roof onto the partly-completed underground gas chamber of Birkenau's Crematorium II.

Below: Auschwitz III was built at the small town of Monowitz a few kilometres from Birkenau. It existed primarily to provide labour for the huge IG Farben Buna (synthetic rubber) plant seen here.



Above: Prisoners are used to build warehouses near the original Auschwitz camp. These were used to store some of the food produced on the huge slave-worked farms surrounding the Auschwitz complex.

developed deficiency diseases like scurvy, their gums bleeding and teeth coming loose. They tried to treat such problems with wild garlic growing round the camps, but the fastidious Germans complained about the smell and put a stop to it.

Some of the women had sex with French or Belgian workers in an adjacent factory barracks, since the Germans repatriated pregnant girls, but most were so malnourished they ceased to menstruate. One young woman was sent back home after she deliberately put her hand in a flax-cutting machine which severed her fingers. As the war

Left: Increasingly as the war and the demands of the fighting services affected available manpower, German companies began to use forced labour to fill the gap. These prisoners are helping to build aero engines at a BMW factory in Bavaria.

turned against Germany, such leniency was no longer forthcoming. Another girl resorted to the same desperate expedient but was forced to carry on working anyway.

Release from forced labour did not end the misery. It could take six to eight weeks to travel from Germany back to a village in the Ukraine. Penniless, alone, and regarded as a racial inferior to be mistreated at will, it was a lonely and dangerous journey for these women. And when they did get home, it was usually to a depopulated village under the savage rule of Nazi collaborators.

The occupying forces were the main employer, so ex-slave labourers often found themselves working as cleaners in German offices and billets. There they were prey to the Germans again, but one *putzfrau* or cleaning woman was given a time-bomb by the local partisans which she put under the bed of the odious Reichs Commissar of Belorussia, Wilhelm Kube.

Innocents killed

A 1943 directive ended the repatriation of pregnant female workers, and they were made to give birth in special 'children's homes' – in reality, death camps for babies. The mothers had to return to work within two weeks; the babies were left to the tender mercies of Nazi officials, who seem to have confined their labours to maintaining written records, evidence that got them hanged in 1946. Infant mortality in these vile institutions was over 80 per cent.

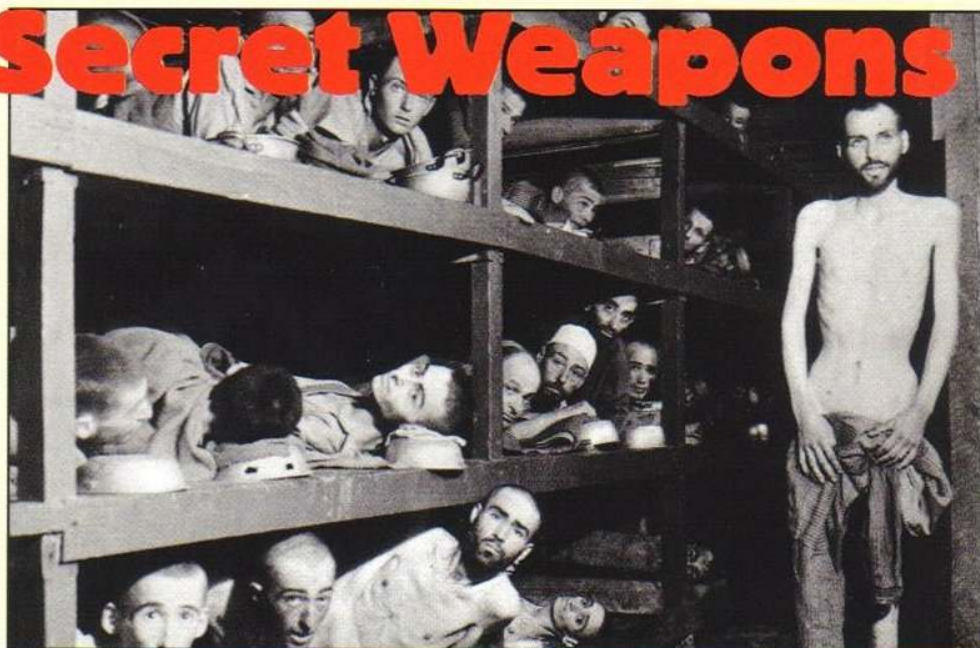
The hunt for slaves handicapped the German war effort. The mass deportations from Russia and the Ukraine in 1942 transformed the Soviet partisan movement from a handful of dedicated patriots to a massive force able to fight entire German armies. When the Germans abducted men and women of working age, children under fifteen were simply left to their own devices. For many,



The slaves who built Hitler's Secret Weapons

Many unwilling workers helped to build Hitler's secret weapons. Reichs Armaments minister Albert Speer met Himmler and Hitler at the 'Wolf's Lair' HQ in August 1943 to agree a radical plan for the dispersal of key industries to underground sites; existing factories were being bombed to oblivion by Allied aircraft. Deep caves in the Harz mountains were enlarged by slave labourers, drawn at first from Buchenwald concentration camp and then from a new camp built next to the tunnel complex itself. Here were assembled parts for the jet fighters, and, above all, the V1 and V2 ballistic missiles on which Hitler pinned so much faith.

Speer visited the facility, code-named 'Dora' in December 1943. "It was the worst place I had ever seen," he later admitted, stunned at the reality of what he had helped to create. Inside the giant caverns the slaves were worked to death with inhuman callousness by the SS. There was no heating, no ventilation, no proper food, and the highlight of the guards' day was to push an exhausted prisoner into the barrels of excrement that served as lavatories. Sixty thousand people were shoved at bayonet point into the caverns; fewer than half would survive, yet the technicians and engineers who presided over all this were whisked away to safe jobs in the USA after 1945. The 'Dora' complex does not figure largely in the memoirs of the German scientists hired by NASA to kick-start the US space program. Albert Speer served a 20 year jail term for his involvement. Fritz Sauckel was hanged.



Above: Buchenwald inmates were extensively used in the armaments industry, including the underground V-weapons factories at Nordhausen.

Right: Slaves built secret weapons like the Fieseler Fi-103 flying bomb, more commonly known as the V-1 and an ancestor of the modern cruise missile.



particularly infants, it meant a miserable death in an abandoned village. Older children grew up quickly or died: many were incorporated to the partisan units as observers, messengers or spies.

In Poland, Hans Frank realised how counterproductive the deportations were to the future of his personal fiefdom, and he tried to stop the process. After a furious exchange with Hitler and Himmler, Frank was sacked.

Fritz Sauckel, Gauleiter of Thuringia, was placed in charge of the Nazi slave labour system in March 1942. Given the title Plenipotentiary for Labour

Allocation, he oversaw the deportation of up to three million people from eastern Europe over the next two years.

Western workers

Of the total labour pool created to sustain the Nazi war effort, some 250,000 people were volunteers – mainly recruited in the first weeks of German occupation, and fooled by promises of wages and good working conditions.

With their usual bureaucratic diligence, the Vichy French authorities recruited young men to work in Germany. North African and Indochinese labourers caught in France in

1940 were handed over to the Todt Organisation. Marshal Petain's youth movement, the *Chantiers de Jeunesse* was eventually put to work on the Atlantic Wall fortifications.

But by the time Sauckel insisted on more active French participation, the writing was on the wall. In February 1944 he decreed that French males between 16 and 60 and females between 18 and 45 were liable to be conscripted for compulsory labour, but the D-Day landings ended the Vichy regime's co-operation and a plan to evacuate all French males able to work was never implemented.

Those French and Belgians

who did find themselves working in Germany were usually treated more humanely than the Russian 'sub-humans', but this is not saying much. Long hours, low pay (25-35 marks per week) and the increasingly deadly Allied bombing attacks did little for productivity. The Messerschmitt Me-163 rocket fighter in the Air and Space Museum, Washington DC was assembled – and sabotaged – by French forced labourers. Had a pilot ever tried to take off, a wedge of steel placed behind the fuel tank would have ruptured it and sent him to a fiery death. Scratched on the bare metal is the legend, 'I am not happy in my work'.

N AZI GERMANY threw up more than its fair share of monsters, but Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich has some claim to being

the worst of the worst. His enemies called him 'Hangman', and even among the SS he was known as the 'Blonde Beast'.

Heydrich was the epitome of the new racial and political breed that rose to leadership in Adolf Hitler's Third Reich. Tall and blonde, he appeared to be a perfect 'new German'; he rode well, was a champion fencer and skier, a fearless pilot and a gifted violinist with a love for the works of Mozart and Haydn. His only major flaw was a high, bleating voice. But this was on the surface: underneath, he was cold, calculating, cynical, completely amoral, a sexual predator with an insatiable lust for power.

Born on 7 March 1904 in Halle, Saxony he was the son of Bruno and Sarah Heydrich. In his early 20s he joined the German Navy and was well regarded by his superiors – though ordinary sailors knew him to be brutal and overbearing.

SEXUAL PREDATOR

Heydrich was an incorrigible womaniser, however, and his downfall for dishonourable conduct came because he seduced and abandoned the daughter of a prominent industrialist with connections to the navy's high command.

Reportedly he told the pregnant girl that he could not marry someone who had given herself to him before marriage. He was dismissed by an Honour Court established by Grand Admiral Raeder. At the same time he got engaged to Lina von Osten, his future wife.

In 1931 he joined the Nazi Party and via his wife's contacts was introduced to Heinrich Himmler, the head of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) which was Hitler's personal bodyguard.

22 HITLER'S THIRD REICH



Reinhard Heydrich

BLONDE BEAST OF THE SS

Reinhard Heydrich was already the most sinister and feared man in Germany when he created the Nazi plan for the elimination of Europe's eleven million Jews.



Heydrich became a valuable assistant, helping to set up the party security service known as the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD). He played a leading role in the 1934 'Night of the Long Knives' in which Hitler used the SS to eliminate the leaders of the Nazi Party's mass movement, the SA, who were the only real threat to the Führer's power.

On 17 July 1936, as Himmler seized control of the Gestapo and all other police formations in Germany, Heydrich was made head of the *Sicherheitspolizei* incorporating the Security Police and the SD. In 1938, following the annexation of Austria, Heydrich established the Office

Reichssicherheitshauptamt or RSHA. This combined every security force in the Reich into one monolithic body, which was to be responsible for a campaign of terror everywhere the German armies marched, and which controlled a programme of mass murder on a scale never before imagined.

MURDER SQUADS

One of Heydrich's first wartime tasks was the destruction of the Polish nation. His SS Special Action Groups or *Einsatzgruppen* had one mission: to eliminate the educated population of Poland. They sought out politicians, professionals, doctors, teachers

and the clergy. When they were found, they were shot. With one notable exception, the remainder of the Polish people were to be enslaved.

That exception was the Jews, of whom there were more than three million in Poland. Where they were not shot out of hand, the Jews were deprived of all rights, and in 1941 were being forced into the first ghettos.

By this time Heydrich's *Einsatzgruppen* were hard at work in the Soviet Union, executing Jews and Communist commissars by the tens of thousands in the wake of the invading Wehrmacht.

WAS HE A JEW?

The ruthless drive which motivated Heydrich in his efforts to exterminate Jews may in part be explained by his own origins. It was generally accepted within the upper echelons of the Third Reich – even by Himmler – that the 'Blonde Beast' was part Jewish.

An investigation in 1932 'cleared' him of any 'taint', but Heydrich went to considerable efforts to suppress his supposed Jewish ancestry. He ordered that

Ice-cold monster who knew all the secrets

Heydrich was a Third Reich bogeyman long before becoming the driving force behind the 'Final Solution.'

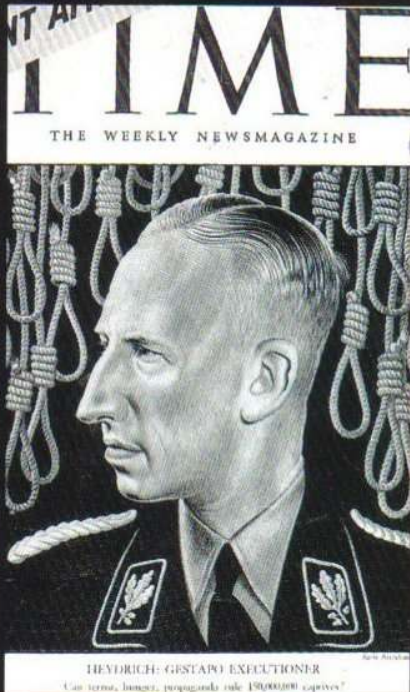
In 1936 he became head of the *Sicherheitspolizei* or Security Police, through which he controlled the Gestapo (the secret police) and the Kripo (the plain-clothed detectives of the criminal police). These he used to create a complex and all-embracing organisation which kept exhaustive details on every person considered an enemy of the state, classifying them as anything from 'assassins' right down to 'grumblers'.

The *Sicherheitspolizei* took the right to place professional criminals – anyone guilty

of at least three crimes, no matter how minor – under preventive detention, which in the Third Reich meant being sent to a concentration camp without trial.

To these were added anti-social elements – homosexuals, beggars, tramps, gypsies, traffic offenders, psychopaths, lunatics – who were all subject to detention.

Some claimed that Heydrich's all-embracing files held incriminating information on every person in Germany – including Heinrich Himmler and other leading Nazis, which might explain why no serious attempt was ever made to dispose of Heydrich by using his possible Jewish descent.



Above: The reign of terror instituted in Germany and occupied Europe by Heydrich's Gestapo led to the young Nazi leader's 'Hangman' nickname.

of Jewish Emigration, putting Adolf Eichmann in control. The aim was to persuade the Jewish population of Austria to leave the country, extorting as much of their wealth as possible in the process. So successful was the concept that a similar office was set up in Berlin.

In 1939, following the invasion of Poland, Heydrich became the head of the



Above: Heydrich sits on the dais at a party function with his master Himmler and SS rival Kurt Daluege, the head of the uniformed police.



Left: Heydrich plays the family man for the camera, though in reality he was a highly-sexed womaniser.

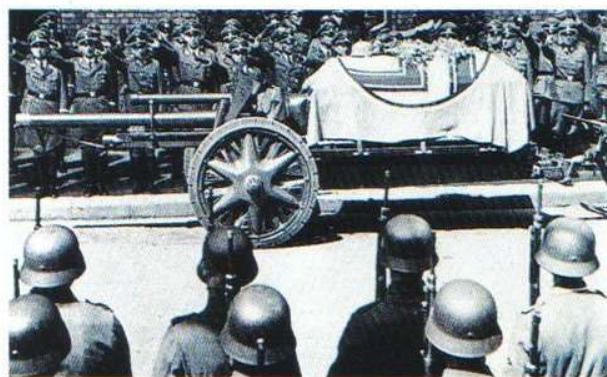


Left: Seen portrayed in the uniform of an SS Obergruppenführer, Reinhard Heydrich also wears combat awards, sports proficiency badges and Nazi party emblems.

Right: Heydrich takes the salute at Prague's Hradcany Castle, after being appointed Reichsprotektor for Bohemia and Moravia.



Right: Heydrich's brutal but efficient rule over what is now the Czech Republic came to an end when he was targeted by assassins sent by the Czech government in exile in London.



the name Sarah be removed from his mother's gravestone, and he brought several slander suits against Germans suggesting that he had "Jewish blood".

SELF-LOATHING

Hitler and Himmler were aware that though he was efficient, energetic and ruthless, Heydrich suffered from a deep self-loathing – Himmler speculated that it was because of his fear of his Jewish ancestry. His political masters knew that it was the one major hold they had over their frighteningly effective subordinate.

Clearly Heydrich was not a happy man. One colleague remembered a drunken evening in which the security chief saw his own reflection in a large wall mirror. Instantaneously, in a cold rage, he pulled his pistol and fired two shots at the reflection, saying "I've got you now, you scum!" But no self-doubt

interfered with his cold commitment to the destruction of European Jewry – a policy he followed not out of hatred but more from cynical opportunism.

However, he did have a pathological detestation of the Christian church and like Hitler he looked forward to the day (after the war had been won) when the Gestapo could deal with the priests and pastors – the "black crows" – once and for all.

On 28 September 1941 Heydrich was appointed *Reichsprotektor* for Bohemia and Moravia, covering most of what is now the modern Czech Republic. His first moves were to increase rations for workers in heavy industry, especially the massive Skoda armaments concern. Simultaneously he ordered the SS to hunt down anyone who showed the slightest resistance to Nazi rule, sometimes deporting their victims to concentration camps

but often having them executed. These 'carrot and stick' tactics seemed to work – overt opposition declined and Czech weapons production, so vital to the German war effort, increased.

This success seriously worried the Czech government in exile in London, and in December 1941 it was decided that Heydrich must die. Two SOE-trained Free Czech sergeants, Jan Kubis and Josef Gabcik, were parachuted into Czechoslovakia and made contact with the resistance.

HEYDRICH MUST DIE

Heydrich was most vulnerable to attack on his journey from his home at Panenske Brezany to his office in the Hradcany Castle, which he took in an open-topped Mercedes with only his driver, SS-Oberscharführer Klein as a bodyguard. At 9.30 am on 27 May 1942, the two men attacked as Heydrich's car slowed to negotiate a sharp bend. Gabcik's

Sten gun failed to fire, but a grenade damaged the car and wounded Heydrich. The two assassins made their escape, chased by their target who leaped out of the car firing his pistol before falling wounded.

Wreckage from the car as well as horsehair and leather from the upholstery had penetrated Heydrich's body, and over the next week he succumbed to blood poisoning, eventually dying on 4 June.

The wave of terror which descended on Czechoslovakia certainly had the effect of negating all that Heydrich had done. More than 10,000 people were arrested, and over 1,300 were killed or executed in reprisal – including Kubis and Gabcik. The crowning horror was the massacre of the entire male population of the village of Lidice. Women and children were deported, and the village was razed to the ground.

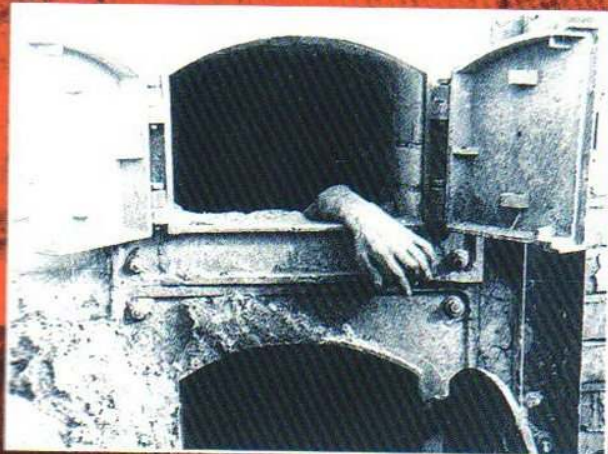
Heydrich's 'Final Solution'

As head of the security services Heydrich was already administrator of concentration camps, but on 20 January 1942 he chaired the Wannsee Conference, which set in motion the "Final Solution of the Jewish question". The Final Solution – *die Endlösung* – formalised the programme of executions already being carried out by the *Einsatzgruppen*, and took it to new heights of horror with the establishment of the extermination camps of eastern Europe: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Majdanek, and the biggest of them all at Auschwitz-Birkenau. These camps had only one purpose, which was the genocidal murder of as many as five million Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, Communists, and others considered undesirable or sub-human by the rulers of the Reich.

Curiously, Heydrich seemed not to have a violent hatred of the Jews, displaying none of the grotesque anti-Semitism of the cruder members of the Nazi Party like Julius Streicher. It was as if he had determined quite cynically that exterminating the Jews was his quickest route to power in the skewed world that was Nazi Germany. And above all it was that quest for personal power which drove the 'Hangman.'



Above: The ideological research department of Heydrich's RSHA dealt with the investigation of people who were 'ideologically dangerous' to the Third Reich. Prominent among these were the Jews, and a whole pseudo-science for identifying racial characteristics was developed.



Above: Reinhard Heydrich's ultimate crime was the 'Final Solution.' Although assassinated before the death camps came on line, Heydrich was largely responsible for setting up the system which gassed and incinerated millions of Jews and others considered undesirable by the Nazi state.



Above: The war on the Eastern Front was without mercy. Nazi security forces under Heydrich's command were responsible for countless atrocities, with reprisals for partisan raids on German targets often taking the form of massacres of entire villages down to the last babe in arms.



Above: Heydrich was responsible for the *Einsatzgruppen*. These were special units of the SS and SD who were tasked with carrying out the Nazi policy of extermination in Eastern Europe. Between 1939 and 1942 they murdered more than one million Poles, Jews and Russians.



BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE

Germany's surface fleets could not hope to match the Royal Navy, but her heavy surface raiders were a major threat to Britain's seaborne trade.

ON FRIDAY 1 September 1939, the *panzerschiff* Admiral Graf Spee joined her support vessel *Altmark* in the mid-Atlantic, south-west of the Canaries. The *Graf Spee* had sailed from Wilhelmshaven a fortnight earlier, transiting the North Sea undetected by the British and passing into the North Atlantic between Iceland and the Faeroes. Her sister ship *Deutschland* sailed a few days later, passing through the Denmark strait to rendezvous with her supply ship off Greenland. Shortly after midday on Sunday 3 September, the German telegraphists picked up an uncoded British radio transmission. It was 'TOTAL GERMANY': the pre-arranged signal that war had begun. Half-an-hour later, SKL (*Seekriegsleitung*, or supreme naval staff) ordered the Kriegsmarine to commence hostilities with Britain.

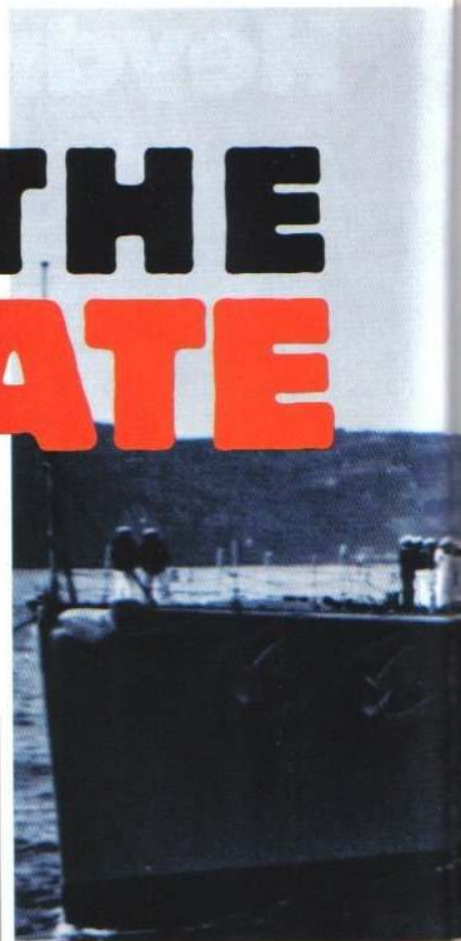
PREPARED FOR WAR

Thus the outbreak of war found two powerful German warships within a few hours' steaming of the main shipping lanes used by Britain's merchant navy. Captain Paul Wenneker took the *Deutschland* south, to search the UK-West Indies routes. It was too late: the British ceased to use the pre-war route on 8 September

and Wenneker found only a single ship that he sank on 5 October, taking the crew aboard the *Deutschland*. British cruisers *Berwick* and *York* were ordered to search for the raider, but at this stage the British were uncertain how many raiders they were dealing with. Wenneker captured the *City of Flint* three days later, and a prize crew sailed her to Norway by way of Murmansk. The *Deutschland* lurked off Newfoundland for the rest of the month, but heavy weather and problems with her engines led to SKL ordering Wenneker home. He slipped through British patrols around Iceland in a severe storm, reaching Kiel in mid-November. In over two months at sea, the *Deutschland* had only

managed to sink two merchant ships and capture a third.

Graf Spee, commanded by 45 year-old Captain Hans Langsdorff, was enjoying far greater success. On the outbreak of hostilities he made for Brazil, since Britain imported large quantities of food from South America. *Graf Spee's* Arado Ar 196 floatplane found the first victim, a 5,000 ton tramp steamer, the *Clement*. It strafed the vessel and the crew took to their boats, Langsdorff giving them the course to steer for Brazil when the *panzerschiff* closed with the abandoned ship. Embarrassingly, it took two torpedoes, 25 rounds from the 150 mm secondary armament and five 280 mm shells to sink



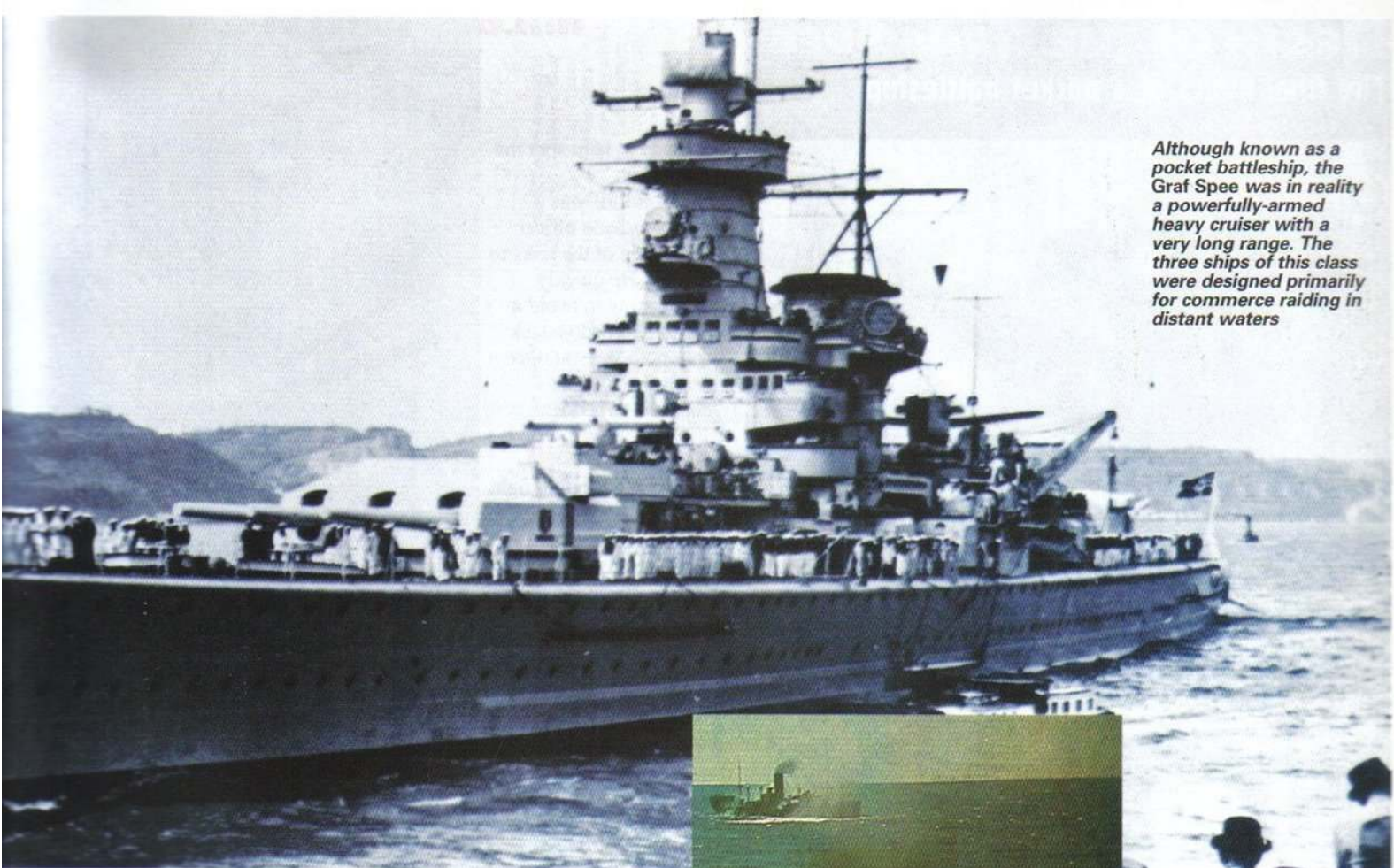
the *Clement*. Langsdorff's telegraphists reported that the merchantman had got off a raider report before the Arado attacked, so he decided to disguise his ship. He had already broadcast using the call-sign of sister ship *Admiral Scheer*. Now he ordered the distinctive tower to be painted to look like the tripod masts of many Allied warships, and a dummy 'B' turret was built abaft the forward 28 cm turret. *Graf Spee* ran up the French tricolour, and continued on her mission.

WREAKING HAVOC

The pocket battleship sank another four merchantmen before rounding the Cape of Good Hope at the end of November. In the Mozambique Channel the *Graf Spee* sank the SS *Africa Shell*. Returning to the south Atlantic, Langsdorff sank the 10,000 ton liner *Doric Star* on the Cape-St. Helena route.

British seamen are pulled from their lifeboat as their ship erupts in flames. Langsdorff of the *Graf Spee* was an old-fashioned sailor who did his best to save the crews of his targets.





Although known as a pocket battleship, the Graf Spee was in reality a powerfully-armed heavy cruiser with a very long range. The three ships of this class were designed primarily for commerce raiding in distant waters

Langsdorff knew he had stirred up a hornet's nest. The British and French navies had eight battleships and battlecruisers, six aircraft carriers and some 20 cruisers searching the Atlantic for the elusive raiders. By 8 December *Graf Spee* had sunk nine merchant ships and, to Langsdorff's credit, not a single life had been lost. Throughout his sortie, he was unfailingly chivalrous to his victims.

He made for the River Plate where SKL reported a concentration of merchant shipping, but also warned of the presence of British cruisers. Langsdorff exercised his crew daily, in clear anticipation of a battle. The *Arado* had broken down irretrievably and was abandoned, so he was relying solely on the ship's lookouts.

At dawn on 13 December, in calm seas with a clear sky, visibility was about 20 nautical miles. Just before 6 am, the lookouts reported mast heads on the horizon. Langsdorff gave the order to clear for action. The leading ship was soon identified

as the heavy cruiser *Exeter*; astern of her were two light cruisers, *Ajax* and *Achilles*, the latter flying the broad pendant of Commodore Henry Harwood. Massive battle ensigns broke out on each British cruiser's masts as they turned to engage.

The light cruisers had about an eight knot speed advantage, so *Graf Spee* had to fight. Except at dangerously close range, *Graf Spee's* armour would protect her from the 6-in (152 mm) guns of the light cruisers. But *Exeter* was armed with six 8-in (203 mm) guns, and the heavy cruiser was the German warship's most dangerous opponent.

At 0617, with the range estimated at 18000 metres, *Graf Spee* opened fire on *Exeter* with her 28-cm main guns. The British split up to divide the German fire, with *Exeter* turning sharply to engage *Graf Spee's* starboard side. The light cruisers attacked from the port flank, and *Ajax* launched her Fairey Seafox



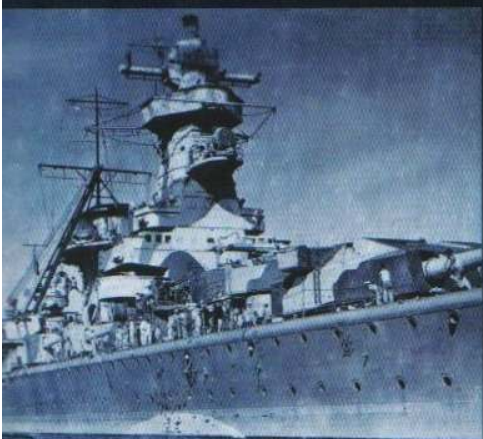
Left: A British steamer is sunk by the secondary guns of a 'Hipper' class cruiser. The 'Hippers' were traditional heavy cruisers with 20.3-cm (8-inch) main armament.

Below: Scheer and Lützow steam in line ahead. Their 28-cm (11-inch) guns made them more powerful than any other cruiser, while they could outrun battleships. However, they were vulnerable to the speed and heavy guns of battlecruisers.



DEATH OF THE *GRAF SPEE*

The final hours of a pocket battleship



Above: Harried by smaller British cruisers, Langsdorff was forced to seek shelter in the neutral port of Montevideo.

Left: The *Graf Spee* suffered some damage in the battle, but was still capable of making her full speed. International law stated that seaworthy combatants were only allowed to remain in a neutral port for 24 hours.



Above: On the morning of 17 December, *Graf Spee* moved from her anchorage and out into the international waters of the River Plate estuary.

Below: Once clear of shipping, the *Graf Spee* was scuttled. Her captain had been persuaded that powerful British forces were waiting for him over the horizon.



28 HITLER'S THIRD REICH

HITLER'S BATTLES 2



seaplane to help spot the fall of shot.

Langsdorff was a former torpedo officer well aware of the risks to his ship. He quickly turned away to avoid a possible torpedo attack from both sides at once – just as the *Exeter* launched torpedoes.

RUNNING FIGHT

It became a running fight with the *Graf Spee* making off westwards.

However, in a succession of wide zigzags she alternately engaged the light cruisers and the *Exeter*. *Ajax* and *Achilles* maintained full speed, Commodore Harwood taking the light cruisers to within 10,000 metres and launching torpedoes. Langsdorff swung away to avoid them, firing four of his own at the *Exeter*.

After an hour's fighting, the British heavy cruiser was badly damaged, half her guns knocked out and a hit killing everyone on the bridge except the captain.

Langsdorff was wounded too. He had been directing the battle from the unprotected foretop gallery, the best position from which to keep track of all three opponents. Three 8-in hits and seventeen 6-in hits had killed 36 of his crew, seriously injured another six men and lightly injured 53. His gunnery officer reported that 60 per cent of the ammunition was expended. The bakery, galley and oil purification plant were destroyed. A hole near the bows was of no immediate concern in such good weather, but could cause problems on an Atlantic crossing.

Graf Spee made smoke as she continued westwards towards Montevideo, turning from time to time to fire everything including her 10.5-cm anti-aircraft guns at the pursuing British cruisers. Langsdorff sought and received permission from SKL to seek refuge in Uruguay to effect repairs, and *Graf Spee* anchored

Right: Captain Hans Langsdorff shot himself three days after scuttling his command.



Above: The blistered guns of HMS *Achilles* elevate to engage the much more powerful *Graf Spee*.

in neutral waters shortly before midnight. Langsdorff buried his dead on 15 December. He was the only officer present to give the old Imperial naval salute rather than the Nazi version.

The 1907 Hague convention on neutrality decreed that a belligerent warship was restricted to a stay of 24 hours or until it had made itself seaworthy. At first the British insisted Langsdorff be ordered to leave after 24 hours, then changed tack as they realised how long it would take extra British warships to arrive. The battlecruiser *Renown* was due off the River Plate by 19 December, along with the carrier *Ark Royal* and light cruiser *Neptune*. Two more heavy cruisers were expected later.

To persuade the Germans to stay put, British intelligence





German heavy cruisers

The Treaty of Versailles which ended World War I placed strict limitations on the size of warship that Germany would be allowed to build, with a 10,000 ton upper limit. Later naval treaties made some concessions to the Kriegsmarine, but until the middle of the 1930s the 10,000 ton limit remained in place. Denied the possibility of building battleships, the Weimar republic planned a number

of heavy cruisers to match those being built in Britain, the USA and Japan, but carrying much heavier guns.

When Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, it was clear that he intended to rebuild Germany into a powerful military nation. However, he paid lip service to the naval treaties until he felt strong enough to abrogate them, which he did in 1936.

KMS Lützow (formerly Deutschland)

First of Germany's three 'pocket battleships' to enter service, the Deutschland was launched in 1931 under the Weimar Republic. At around 12,000 tons standard displacement (rising to as much as 16,000 tons full load) it was considerably larger than the treaty limit to which it had supposedly been built. Armed with six 28-cm (11-inch) guns, and powered by eight MAN diesels, these ships were originally classed as *panzerschiffe* (armoured ships) but were reclassified as *schwere Kreuzer* (heavy cruiser) in 1940. Lützow is seen as it would have been at the end of the war, the curved bow having been fitted in 1940 and the tall funnel cap in 1941.

Deutschland was renamed **Lützow** after the loss of the Graf Spee, to avoid the embarrassing possibility of a ship named after Germany being sunk. Torpedoed on two occasions, Lützow spent much of the first three years of the war in dry dock. Her only major action was in the battle of the Barents Sea in December 1942, a tactical defeat for the Germans. **Admiral Scheer** was launched in 1933, and made two successful commerce raids

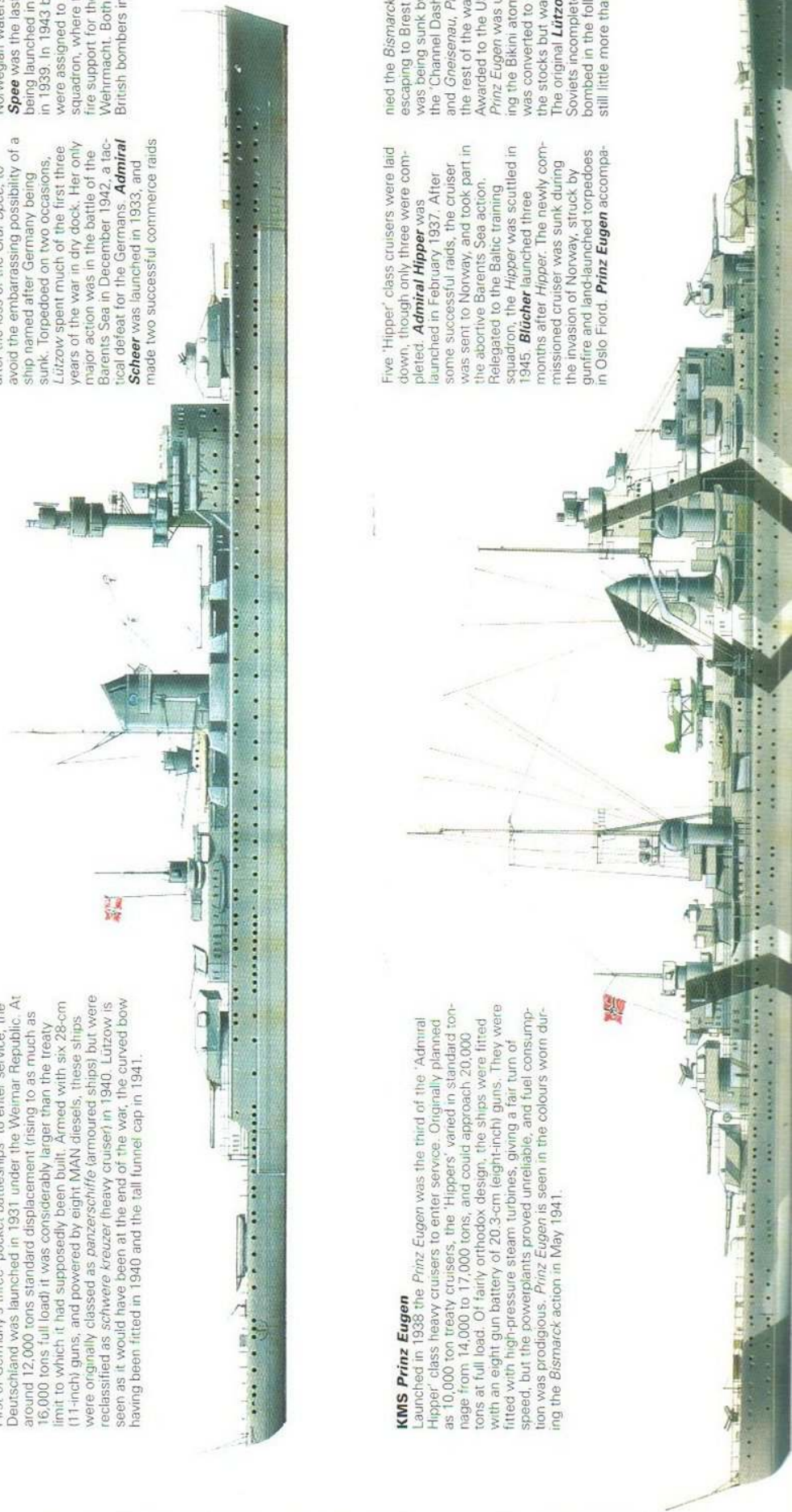
into the Atlantic before moving to Norwegian waters. **Admiral Graf Spee** was the last to be commissioned, being launched in 1934 and scuttled in 1939. In 1943 both surviving ships were assigned to the Baltic training squadron, where they provided gunfire support for the retreating Wehrmacht. Both were destroyed by British bombers in 1945.

KMS Prinz Eugen

Launched in 1938 the Prinz Eugen was the third of the 'Admiral Hipper' class heavy cruisers to enter service. Originally planned as 10,000 ton treaty cruisers, the 'Hipers' varied in standard tonnage from 14,000 to 17,000 tons, and could approach 20,000 tons at full load. Of fairly orthodox design, the ships were fitted with an eight gun battery of 20.3-cm (eight-inch) guns. They were fitted with high-pressure steam turbines, giving a fair turn of speed, but the powerplants proved unreliable, and fuel consumption was prodigious. Prinz Eugen is seen in the colours worn during the Bismarck action in May 1941.

Five 'Hipper' class cruisers were laid down, though only three were completed. **Admiral Hipper** was launched in February 1937. After some successful raids, the cruiser was sent to Norway, and took part in the abortive Barents Sea action. Relegated to the Baltic training squadron, the Hipper was scuttled in 1945. **Blücher** launched three months after Hipper. The newly commissioned cruiser was sunk during the invasion of Norway, struck by gunfire and land-launched torpedoes in Oslo Fjord. **Prinz Eugen** accompa-

nied the Bismarck in May 1941, escaping to Brest while the battleship was being sunk by the British. Part of the 'Channel Dash' with *Scharnhorst* and *Greisenau*, Prinz Eugen spent the rest of the war in the Baltic. Awarded to the USA after the war, Prinz Eugen was used as a target during the Bikini atomic tests. **Seydlitz** was converted to an aircraft carrier on the stocks but was never completed. The original **Lützow** was sold to the Soviets incomplete in 1940, and was bombed in the following year while still little more than a skeleton.



Germany's only other cruisers were vessels of between 6,000 and 7,000 tons. Armed with 15-cm (5.9-inch) guns, they were designed as fleet scouts and destroyer leaders. Some saw service in northern waters, but they lacked the range and power to make good commerce raiders.

HITLER'S BATTLES 2



leaked false reports that heavy units were already in the vicinity.

The deception worked. Langsdorff believed that if he sailed, he would be intercepted and destroyed by superior forces. An old fashioned seaman, he took the view that while a futile last stand might impress Hitler, his first responsibility was to his people. Sailing out into the River Plate, he ordered the crew off the ship after setting scuttling charges which wrecked the *Graf Spee*. After following his men to ashore and seeing to their safety, Langsdorff shot himself.

OTHER RAIDERS

The destruction of the *Graf Spee* did not dent the Kriegsmarine's determination to use the *panzerschiffe* for their intended purpose of commerce raiding. A prolonged inquest took place after the action, the German naval attaché in Montevideo interviewing *Graf Spee*'s officers on the instructions of SKL. The consensus was that Langsdorff had been in error: the pocket battleship's armament and machinery had been unaffected by the battle. She could still make full speed and her weapons had been functional. Had she broken out into the River Plate – which is 100 miles wide at its mouth – she could have attempted the passage to Germany or even laid low in the empty wastes of the southern ocean until the cordon of Allied warships dispersed.

Deutschland (renamed *Lützow* in November to avoid the ill-omened possibility of losing a vessel named after the Reich) was earmarked for another commerce raid, but was torpedoed and damaged by a British submarine during the Norwegian campaign in April 1940. It fell to Admiral Scheer, under the command of Captain Krancke, to make the next 'pocket battleship' raid.

Sailing from Kiel on 27 October and breaking into the Atlantic via the Denmark strait, Scheer encountered mountainous seas off Greenland. The storms abated and on 5 November Scheer's Arado Ar 196 floatplane located a convoy. Krancke steered to intercept, but was temporarily thwarted by the self-sacrifice of the convoy's escort, the Armed Merchant Cruiser *Jervis Bay*. The unprotected liner, mounting eight 6-in guns, could not hope to survive a battle with the *Scheer* but engaged her nevertheless, her commander Captain Fegen calculating that his resistance would win time for his charges to escape into the gathering dusk. The sacrifice was not in vain: Scheer despatched the AMC,

Right: Norway, April 1940. The battered British destroyer HMS Glowworm turns towards the Hipper. Moments later it will ram the heavy German cruiser, causing enough damage to delay its first commerce raid into the Atlantic.

Above: Admiral Hipper as originally designed, with a vertical bow and flat funnel cap. Experience in northern waters led to the modified 'Atlantic bow' seen on the profile of Prinz Eugen.

but was only able to catch five of the 37 ships, chasing them hither and thither well into the night.

SCHEER'S CRUISE

Scheer pressed into the South Atlantic, sinking a number of independent merchantmen en route, before rounding the Cape on 28 January. By 6 February, Krancke was off Madagascar astride the Perth-Durban shipping lane. He had already met with disguised merchant raider *Thor*, and now made a successful rendezvous with the raider *Atlantis*. Krancke learned he had been awarded the

Ritterkreuz the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, on 21 February.

Any satisfaction was ruined the next day, when he was spotted by a Supermarine Walrus flying boat. The aircraft came from the light cruiser *Glasgow* and analysis of the local signal traffic revealed the presence of an unexpected number of British naval units in the Indian Ocean. In fact, there was a troop convoy in progress, escorted by five cruisers and a carrier. Krancke maintained a feint course until dusk, then made a high speed withdrawal back to the Atlantic.

The *Scheer* was ordered home, and after another rendezvous in remote waters – this time with the raider *Kormoran* and the submarine U-124 – steered for the Denmark Strait. There was a tense moment when the lookouts sighted a battleship-size target: there was no sea room for the *Scheer* to evade. It turned out to be an iceberg. Krancke brought his ship into Kiel for a triumphal welcome on 1 April: he had sunk or taken 16 ships of 99,059 gross tons in a cruise lasting 161 days.

A week earlier, the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* had put into Brest after Operation 'Berlin': a 59-day raid under the command of Admiral Gunther Lütjens that took the two battlecruisers from Iceland to the coast of West Africa. Forbidden to engage major naval units,

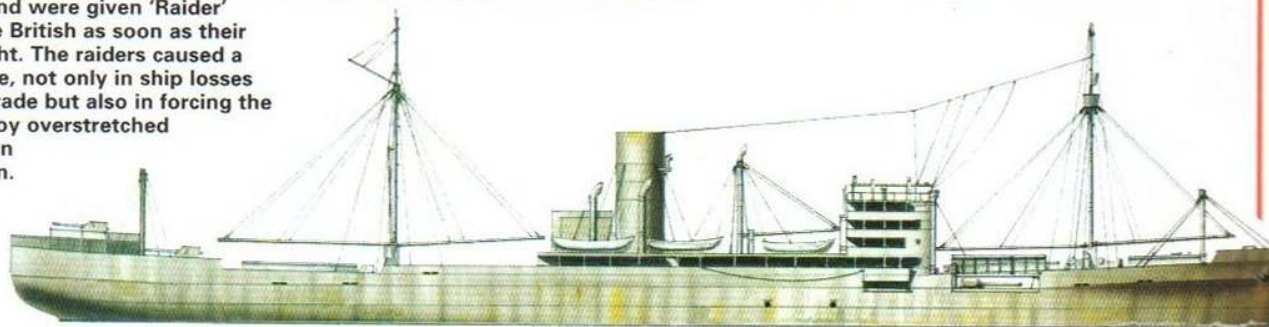


Disguised Merchant Raiders

Although large German warships were an ever-present threat to British trade, they were less successful than the eight converted merchant ships which the Kriegsmarine sent on operations far from European waters. Known as *Handels-Stor-Kreuzer* (merchant raiding cruisers) or *Hilfskreuzer* (auxiliary cruisers), these were fast merchantmen carrying heavy concealed armament sent to prey on individual British ships sailing outside the normal convoy zones. Given an HSK number on conversion, they also used 'Schiff' numbers in communications, and were given 'Raider' designations by the British as soon as their activity came to light. The raiders caused a good deal of trouble, not only in ship losses and disruption to trade but also in forcing the Royal Navy to deploy overstretched warship resources in tracking them down.

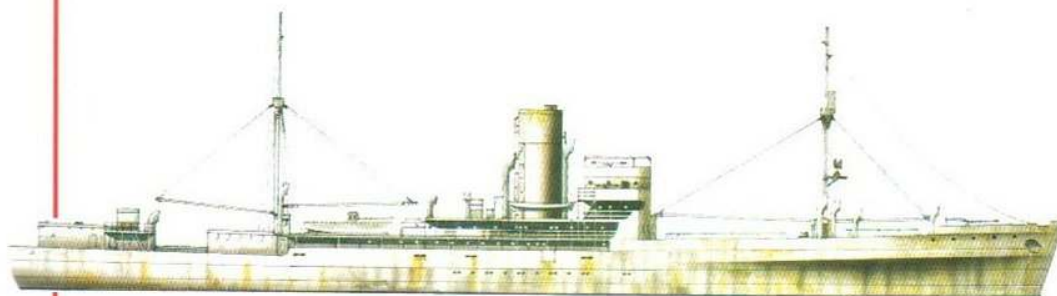
HSK 2 *Atlantis* (Schiff 16, Raider C)

Originally the Hansa Line's cargo ship *Goldenfels*, the *Atlantis* was one of the most successful of all the German raiders. Armed with six 15-cm guns taken from obsolete pre-WWI battleships and carrying two Heinkel seaplanes, the *Atlantis* sailed on 11 March 1940 on a 622-day voyage into the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean. The raider sank 22 ships of 145,697 gross tons before being challenged and destroyed by the British heavy cruiser HMS *Dorsetshire*.



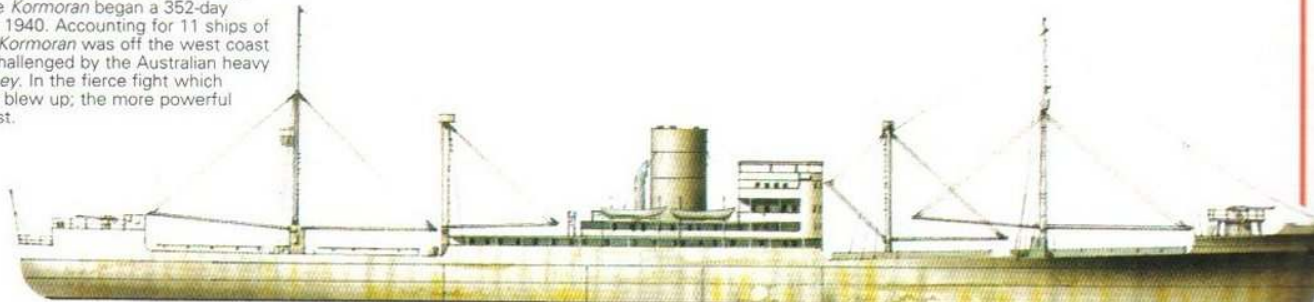
HSK 4 *Thor* (Schiff 10, Raider E)

Originally the Oldenburg-Portugiesische steam turbine ship *Santa Cruz*, the *Thor* made two cruises, the first lasting 329 days beginning in June 1940. *Thor* fought three battles against British Armed Merchant Cruisers, but in spite of receiving some damage managed to capture or sink 12 ships of 96,547 gross tons. Refitting in Brest, *Thor* sailed again in November 1941. A 324-day cruise through the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean accounted for a further ten ships of 56,037 tons before the raider reached Yokohama in Japan. *Thor* was destroyed on 11 November 1942 when the supply ship *Uckermark* (formerly the *Altmark*) blew up while cleaning tanks alongside.



HSK 8 *Kormoran* (Schiff 41, Raider G)

Formerly the HAPAG diesel-electric-powered cargo-liner *Steiermark*, the *Kormoran* began a 352-day cruise in December 1940. Accounting for 11 ships of 68,289 gross tons, *Kormoran* was off the west coast of Australia when challenged by the Australian heavy cruiser HMAS *Sydney*. In the fierce fight which followed, *Kormoran* blew up; the more powerful *Sydney* was also lost.



Lütjens had been frustrated to encounter several convoys escorted by Royal Navy battleships. Nevertheless, he had sunk or taken 22 Allied ships totalling 115,622 tons.

FRENCH BASES

Brest had already been used as a base by the Kriegsmarine. The heavy cruiser *Hipper* anchored there on 27 December 1940 after a month-long raid into the North Atlantic. She had made contact with a convoy four days earlier and attempted a night torpedo attack, but it turned out to be a troop convoy and *Hipper* was briefly engaged by the British cruiser *Berwick* before breaking contact. Under the command of

Captain Meisel, *Hipper* sortied again on 1 February with a view to co-ordinating operations with Lütjens' squadron. Fortune smiled on Meisel this time as he encountered the unescorted convoy SL64 from Freetown on 12 February. The action expended half his ammunition, and most of his fuel – the 'Hipper' class was known for its prodigious fuel consumption – so Meisel put back into Brest two days later. He reported sinking 13 ships totalling 75,000 tons. In fact, he had destroyed seven ships totalling 32,000 tons.

Basing heavy units at Brest saved them from the potentially dangerous passage around Iceland, where they risked

encountering superior forces in confined waters. It saved a great deal of time and fuel too: even the notoriously short-legged *Hipper* could range far into the Atlantic. However, the big cruiser returned to Germany on 15 March. Her machinery required repairs beyond the ability of the dockyard, and it had also become clear that RAF Bomber Command took an unhealthy interest in the French port.

In May 1941 *Hipper*'s sister ship *Prinz Eugen* accompanied the battleship *Bismarck* on what turned out to be the swansong of the Kriegsmarine's Atlantic campaign. The two ships never had a chance to get in amongst

the convoys; after disposing of the veteran British battlecruiser *Hood*, the German battleship was hunted down and destroyed by vastly superior British forces. The cruiser had been detached earlier and made it safely to Brest.

Atlantic convoy raids by major German warships required an immense outlay of resources and manpower. German heavy ships were hugely overmanned by comparison with British warships, and with no convenient bases their sorties required the support of large numbers of support ships. The results never justified the effort. Battleship actions made dramatic headlines, but U-boats were the real threat to Britain's Atlantic lifeline.



PANZERKAMPFWAGEN VI TIGER

TO THE unknowing eye, the two German tanks lumbering purposefully towards the village of Malinava were heading for a trap. Malinava, north of the town of Dunaberg (now known as Daugavpils) in Latvia, had been occupied by advanced elements of the elite Soviet 4th Shock Army. It was a reconnaissance in force, with a battalion of T-34/85 tanks led by a single example of the brand-new Josef Stalin or JS-1 heavy tank, which with its 122-mm gun was one of the most powerfully-armed fighting vehicles in the world. The huge 1944 summer offensive in the south had caught

When it appeared in 1942 the Tiger was the most powerful tank in the world. It was to be a dominant force on the battlefield right up to the end of the World War II.

the Germans completely by surprise, and whole German armies were in the process of being wiped out. Here in the north, armoured columns of the Second Baltic front were heading for the port of Riga with the aim of cutting off the divisions of the German Army Group North.

However, the men in the tanks approaching Malinava knew exactly what they were doing. If it was a trap, then when it closed, the Soviets would find themselves with a Tiger by the tail. More accurately,

they would have two Tigers – Panzerkampfwagen VI Tiger heavy tanks, to be precise. The most powerful and hardest-hitting armoured fighting vehicle of the war – and these two had veteran crews, led by tank ‘aces’ Carius and Kirschner.

Flame belched from the Tigers’ long-barrelled 88-mm guns before the T-34s could turn their turrets, instantly exploding two Soviet tanks. Only the single JS-1 had any chance of taking them on, but it was burning before it could engage as the Tigers continued to fire. In a short but fierce battle through the ruins, the two German panzers destroyed 17 Soviet tanks in under 20 minutes. The action of the two Tigers managed to blunt the main Soviet attack for several days.

It was big, it was slow, and its crews cursed its unreliability. But when it came to a fight, the Tiger's armour and gun made it almost unbeatable.



The Tigers were from the Wehrmacht's *schwere Panzer Abteilung* (heavy tank battalion) 502, which had been the first to take the powerful vehicle into action two years before. The fight outside Dunaberg was a perfect example of why the Tiger was probably the most feared armoured vehicle produced by any side in World War II.

FIGHTING POWER

The combination of unparalleled protection and superior fire power meant that in the right circumstances and with experienced crews, it was almost unbeatable, and could have an effect on the battlefield out of all proportion to its numbers.

The Tiger concept dated back to 1937 and a specification for a new heavy tank issued by the German Armaments Ministry to Daimler-Benz, Henschel, MAN and Porsche. At that stage it was envisaged as a heavy tank which could break through defenses like the French Maginot line.

Work on the project was shelved when the PzKpfw III and IV proved satisfactory in Europe, but in May 1941 a new requirement was issued for a 45-tonne tank armed with a modified 8.8-cm Flak gun.

THE FÜHRER STEPS IN

Hitler had been impressed by the heavy armour of the British Matilda I and French Char B1 bis in 1940 and with the invasion of Russia imminent saw a need for a heavy tank, with the heaviest armour possible. The Führer's intervention meant that the new design got much heavier. Prototypes of the PzKpfw VI were to be ready for demonstration at Rastenburg in East Prussia on the Führer's birthday – 20 April – in a year's time.

Henschel and Porsche each submitted a vehicle, the latter being powered by a complex diesel-electric drive. The Henschel design was judged more practical and economical to build, though the 90 Porsche chassis were converted into tank

Right: Ninety of the complex Porsche Tiger chassis were built before the Wehrmacht decided to concentrate on the simpler Henschel design. The Porsche Tigers were completed as self-propelled guns, known as Ferdinands (after the designer, Doctor Ferdinand Porsche).



"We will be victorious, thanks to our Tiger!"

**Adolf Hitler,
Before the battle
of Kursk**



Main picture: Tigers move across the Russian steppes during the Battle of before Kursk, kicking up dust as their turrets nose round in the quest for enemy tanks.

Right: The burning remains of a Red Army T-34 show what happens in a long-range duel with a Tiger. Even with its thick, well-sloped front armour, the Soviet tank is vulnerable to the Tiger at ranges of up to 1400 metres: conversely, it has to close to almost point-blank range to have a chance of destroying the big German tank.



HITLER'S THIRD REICH 3



Above: A German army Tiger passes the Victor Emmanuel monument in Rome late in 1943. Germany had occupied Italy following the overthrow of Mussolini and Italy's armistice with the Allies.

destroyers. They were known as Elephants or Ferdinands.

The Tiger's operational career lasted less than three years. The first tanks to see action were deployed in small numbers with sPzAbt 502 on the Leningrad front in August 1942. It was an inauspicious beginning: several were lost as they advanced in

single file over marshes, unable to manoeuvre when engaged from the flank by Soviet artillery.

Later that year, Tigers were shipped to the Afrika Korps, going into action in Tunisia in December. It quickly became a bogeyman to British and American troops, the thick front armour making it almost invulnerable to Allied tank guns, while its powerful cannon could destroy any Allied tank at ranges of two kilometres or more.

As the tide turned against the Axis in North Africa, 17 Tigers

of sPzAbt 504 were retained in Sicily, where they were attached to the Hermann Goering Panzer Division. They attacked the American beachhead when the Allies landed in July 1943, but were driven off by heavy naval gunfire from destroyers operating close inshore. Sixteen out of the 17 tanks were lost in the next few days, most being destroyed by their crews to prevent capture.

ACTION IN ITALY

Tigers were heavily involved in the fighting in Italy, the reconstituted 504th losing three quarters of its tanks in the fighting after the battle of Monte Cassino in June 1944. The 508th Abteilung was sent to Italy at about the same time, tasked with destroying the Allied Bridgehead at Anzio. However, they were unloaded nearly 200 km from the battle, and the approach march through twisty, mountainous Italian terrain cost the unit nearly 30 Tigers due to mechanical failure. The survivors mounted an attack, alongside PzKpfw V Panthers and the heavy Tiger-based assault guns known as

Ferdinands, but were driven back by naval gunfire.

The bulk of Germany's Tigers were deployed to the Eastern Front, but until 1944 there were rarely more than 150 tanks available, and of these less than 50 per cent were serviceable at any one time. During the battle of Kursk 147 Tigers were assembled, and by an almost superhuman effort over 120 were actually ready to fight. They acquitted themselves well in battle, only 18 being lost. Combat reports from the summer of 1943 indicated that Tiger units destroyed at least 20 enemy



Above: A Tiger from the 508th schwere Heeres Panzer Abteilung heads towards Anzio early in 1944. The long approach march to the Anzio front – nearly 200 kilometres from the railhead – put great strain on the battalion's tanks: only about 15 of 45 Tigers actually reached the battle without breaking down.



Left: The heavy Panzer company of SS Panzer Regiment Das Reich had received its first 10 Tigers by January 1943, and was heavily involved in the Kharkov counter-offensive of March. Tank S13 nearest the camera has taken a hit in the side: note the pierced and buckled mudguard over the tracks and the field repairs to the hull just above and partially obscuring the Balkenkreuz.

INSIDE THE TIGER

Teamwork the key to success

tanks, 15 anti-tank guns and four artillery pieces for every one of their own that was lost

LACK OF RANGE

The big tank's complexity, unreliability and low endurance meant that it was at a disadvantage over the vast expanses of Russia. Even so, in a situation which played to the type's strengths it was almost unbeatable. And it could fight at very long range: in July 1944 a tank commanded by the CO of *sPzAbt 506* destroyed a Soviet T-34 at a range of nearly four kilometres. Individual Tiger commanders ran up huge scores: Michael Wittmann of the SS was the most successful ace of the war, he and his crew destroying more than 100 enemy tanks in the east alone. He was closely followed by Wehrmacht experts like Oberleutnant Otto Carius.

The Tiger's great strength was in the protection it offered its crew, and the immense

Pre-war tanks tended to have two-man turrets, with the commander and gunner often loading and manning machine guns, their multiple tasks having a detrimental effect on efficiency.

The Tiger followed the standard German practice from the Panzer III onwards of having a three-man turret, which enabled each man to concentrate on his most important task. The commander directed the tank and found targets, the gunner located the targets

in his sight and engaged them, the loader making sure that the correct ammunition – armour-piercing or high-explosive – was loaded for each specific target. At its best, a well-drilled Tiger crew made the Tiger an even more formidable fighting machine.

COMMANDER

Right: The most important member of the crew who directed the vehicle in action also served as the primary means of locating targets. Seated at the left rear of the turret, the commander had a rotating cupola equipped with vision blocks, giving limited all-around vision even when the tank was fully 'buttoned up'.

RADIO OPERATOR

Right: Seated in the right front of the Tiger's hull, the radio operator also manned the machine gun mounted in the front plate of the hull. This was primarily used as an anti-infantry weapon.

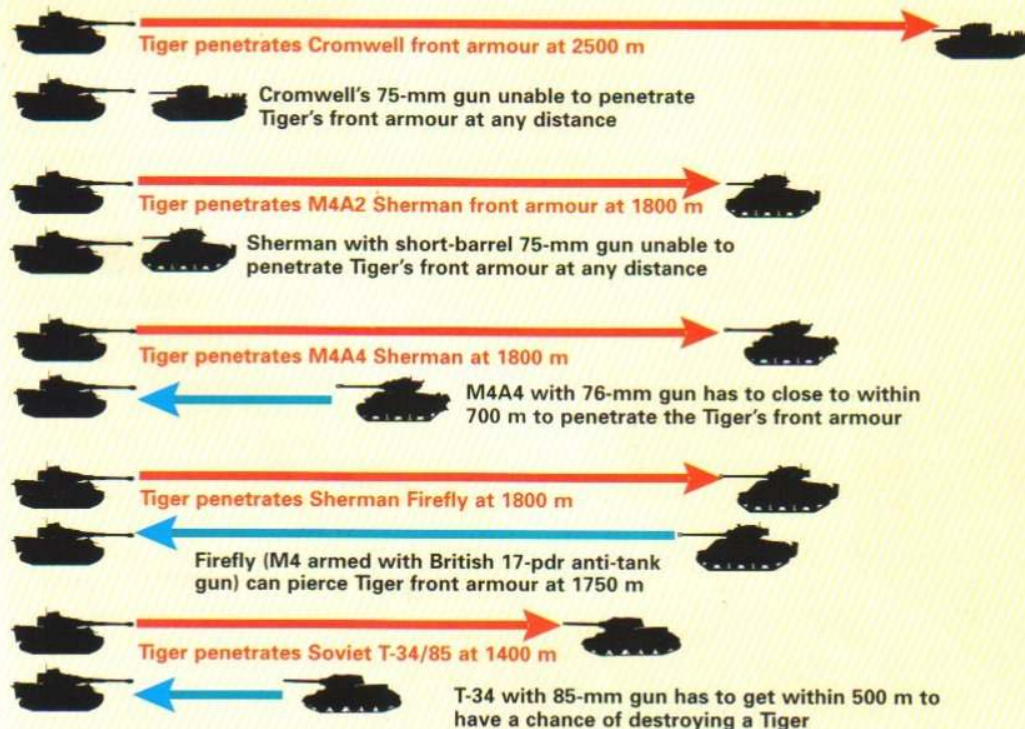
DRIVER

Left: Seated next to the radio operator in the left front of the hull, the driver was tasked with driving the heavy vehicle as smoothly as possible, and was often the oldest, most mature member of the crew.



Killing from a Distance

The Tiger's superb 8.8-cm gun could outrange and penetrate more armour than almost every other tank gun, with the exception of the Anglo/American hybrid Sherman



GUNNER

Above: Sitting in the left of the turret immediately in front of and below the commander, the gunner controlled turret traverse and used a Turmzielfernrohr 9B or 9C sight to acquire targets.



LOADER

Above: Located in the right of the turret, the loader was responsible for choosing and loading the type of ammunition specified by the gunner.



SUPER TIGER

The shock received by the Wehrmacht on encountering the superb Soviet T-34 spurred German designers to produce much more powerful, harder-hitting tanks. First to incorporate combat lessons was the PzKpfw V Panther medium tank, which had well-sloped armour and a long, high-velocity gun.

Introduced in 1944, the very powerful Tiger II resembled a scaled-up Panther. Known as the *König* or 'King' Tiger, it was mechanically similar to the original PzKpfw VI, but with sloping armour of greater thickness it was even harder to kill – though its weight of around 70 tonnes made it even less mobile than the earlier model.

The 8.8-cm gun had a longer barrel than that of the original Tiger, and with it the Tiger II could outrange and destroy any

other tank in service.

The King Tiger first saw action on the Eastern Front, and was also involved in France, Belgium (supporting the Ardennes offensive) and in the final defence of the Reich. Only 485 were ever completed.

Below: A Tiger II of the 503rd sPzAbt moves through the outskirts of Budapest early in 1945 as Army and SS troops attempt to relieve the 9th SS Korps trapped in the city: the King Tigers almost broke through the encircling Red Army, but stiffening Soviet resistance drove them back, and only 785 out of 45,000 German soldiers escaped the Hungarian capital.



striking power of its gun. The thick, slab-sided armour lacked the good ballistic shape found on contemporary designs like the Panther and the Soviet T-34, but with a thickness which ranged from 63 to 102 mm on the hull and 82 to 100 mm on the turret of the Ausf H, (increased to 110 mm on the Ausf E) it hardly needed to.

'EIGHTY-EIGHT'

Main armament was the 8.8-cm KwK 36 L156, adapted from the anti-tank version of the superb 'eighty-eight' Flak gun. It was the most powerful anti-tank gun then in use by any army, capable of penetrating 112 mm of armour at 1400 metres. The Tiger carried 92 rounds of main gun ammunition in stowage bins, lockers in the turret floor and anywhere else that was handy.

Self-defence against infantry was provided by two MG34 7.92-mm machine guns, one mounted co-axially with the main gun and one in a flexible mount in the front of the hull.

Right: It might have weighed the best part of 60 tonnes, but the Tiger's wide tracks gave it mobility in the worst of the mud and snow encountered in Russia.

In spite of its immense power, the Tiger had several bad flaws. The turret traverse was slow, which meant that a fast-moving (and brave) enemy tank crew might be able to manoeuvre for a flank or rear shot. Tigers were slow, and the big tank's limited range meant that in a mobile battle it was at a considerable disadvantage.

Tigers were complex vehicles, needing experienced crews and maintenance personnel to keep operational under field conditions. All too often bogged-down or broken-down Tigers had to be destroyed, the tank's massive weight making it an impossible load for standard

Wehrmacht recovery vehicles.

WIDE TRACK

The Tiger needed a track with a width of 72.5 cm to spread the load. This was too wide for conventional railway flat cars, and so for transport the outer road wheels had to be removed and a narrower 52-cm track fitted. It took considerable effort to refit the outer wheels and wide tracks for combat.

Ride comfort was good – the interleaving road wheels helped to spread the massive weight evenly, and the torsion bar suspension gave a smooth ride over rough terrain. However, if an inner road wheel was

damaged by a mine, field repairs were a major problem. In the East, mud freezing between the wheels overnight could immobilise the tank.

By the summer of 1944, Tiger strength was reaching its peak, with over 300 in service in the East (with around 250 being operational), and a further 98 deployed in France and 76 in Italy. However, the massive battles of that summer against overwhelming enemy strength saw heavy Tiger losses (more than 240 in three months on the Eastern Front alone).

Production of the Tiger was never high. Initially 12 vehicles were completed per month, but by November 1942 this had increased to 25. It went through various modifications during its two-year production run; early models had smoke projectors and pistol ports in the turret side, but these were removed in later

Muzzle Brake: The Tiger's KwK L/56 gun was fitted with a muzzle brake, which reduced muzzle velocity to just under 1000 m/sec with armour-piercing rounds.



vehicles. Those that were destined for Africa and Russia were fitted with air filters against dust and sand. Eventually 1,355 Tigers were completed. The last operational Tigers were used to defend the centre of Berlin in April 1945.

There were few Tiger variants: around 80 were completed as *Befehlswagen* with extra radios giving commanders improved control of their units. Some recovery versions were improvised out of necessity – the standard Wehrmacht recovery vehicle was the SdKfz 9 18-ton half track, but two or even three might be needed to handle a Tiger. The field solution to recovering a damaged or bogged-down Tiger I was to use two more Tigers to tow it clear.



Escape hatch: Early Tigers had a pistol port in the right rear of the turret, but from the 46th turret this was replaced by an escape hatch as seen here.

Air filters: The four large bottle-like attachments on the rear of the hull are Feifel air filters, fitted to tanks designed for tropical or desert service.

Cupola: Early Tiger cupolas – a mini-turret on the main turret just for the commander – had simple vision slits like this example; later versions had a rotating hatch and were fitted with periscopes with a greater field of view.

Heat shields: Operational use showed that glowing exhausts could be seen from a long distance away at night. sPzAbt 501 was the first unit to fit sheet metal shields around the exhaust stacks in the rear of the hull.

Front armour: Tigers were heavily protected, the armour plate in the front of the turret and in the front of the hull being more than 100-mm thick.

Pistol port: The MP Klappe or machine pistol port next to the storage bin allowed the commander to fire a sub-machine gun against attacking infantry.

Tracks: The Tiger's *Geländeketten* or cross-country tracks were 72.5-cm wide, and distributed the Tiger's 58 tonnes to produce an effective ground pressure of around 0.73 kg per square cm.

Stowage bin: A large stowage box was fitted to the rear of all Tiger turrets from the 56th built.

Engine: Early Tigers were powered by a 23-litre Maybach HL 230 P45 Vee-12 petrol engine, which delivered 522 kW (700 hp) through a Maybach transmission with eight forward and four reverse gears.

PzKpfw VI Tiger I Ausf E

Schwere Heeres Panzer Abteilung 501

Tunisia, December 1942

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

PzKpfw VI Tiger Ausf E

Crew: Five

Weight: 55000 kg (121,250 lb)

Dimensions: Length (including armament) 8.24 m (27 ft 0 in); length (hull) 6.20 m (20 ft 4 in); width 3.73 m (12 ft 3 in); height 2.86 m (9 ft 3.25 in); combat track width 71.5 cm (28.1 in); travelling track width 51.5 cm (20.3 in)

Armour thickness: 100-mm hull and turret front; 80 mm turret walls; 60-80mm hull sides and rear; 25 mm top and belly

Powerplant: One Maybach HL 230 P 45 12-cylinder petrol engine developing 700 hp (522 kW)

Performance: Maximum road speed 45 km/h (28 mph); normal maximum speed 38 km/h (24 mph); maximum cross-country speed c.18 km/h (11 mph); maximum road range stated to be 195 km (121 miles) but

under operational conditions rarely more than 100 km (62 miles); fording 1.2 m (3 ft 11 in); gradient 60 per cent; vertical obstacle 0.79 m (2 ft 7 in), trench 1.80 m (5 ft 11 in)

Main armament: One KwK 36 L/56 88-mm cannon with 92 rounds

Ammunition: Armour-piercing, armour-piercing tungsten core, high-explosive and hollow-charge (HEAT)

Muzzle velocity: 600m/sec (HE); 773 m/sec (AP); 930 m/sec (AP/tungsten core)

Effective range: 3000 m with armour piercing and 5000 m with HE rounds

Armour penetration: 171 mm at close range and 110 mm at 2000 m using AP tungsten-core rounds

Secondary armament: One 7.92-mm MG 34 mounted coaxially and one MG 34 flexibly mounted in hull front

Tiger Ace

Michael Wittmann

The most successful armoured 'ace' of World War II found an ideal platform in the fighting power of his Tiger tank.

As an NCO Michael Wittmann had commanded armoured cars and assault guns in Poland, France and Greece, serving with the *Leibstandarte-SS* as it evolved from Hitler's bodyguard to a fully-fledged armoured division. Sent to the *SS-Junkerschule* at Bad Tolz in Bavaria, he returned to the division as an officer in 1943. There he was made a section commander in the Tiger-equipped *schwere SS-Panzer Abteilung* or heavy SS Panzer Battalion 13. He quickly turned his regular crew – Woll, Berger, Kirschner and Pollmann – into a lethal team, knocking out 30 Soviet tanks, 28 anti-tank guns, and two artillery batteries during the Battle of Kursk.

By 9 January 1944 when he was awarded the Knight's Cross, Wittmann's score stood at 66 tanks and, as if to celebrate the award of the decoration, he shot up 19 T-34s and three heavy assault guns. On the 20th he was promoted to *SS-Obersturmführer* and ten days later added the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross. By the time he was transferred to France Wittmann's score stood at 117 tanks and assault guns.

Right: Tigers of the 101st heavy SS Panzer Battalion pass through the French countryside near Rouen as they advance toward the Normandy invasion front. Wittmann commanded one of the battalion's Tiger companies.

On the morning of 13 June 1944 he took four Tigers from *SSPzAbt 101*, (the heavy tank unit of the 1st SS Panzer corps) and, with a solitary Panzer IV flanked a column of the British 7th Armoured Division moving out of Villers-Bocage, near Hill 213 on the road towards Caen.

Wittmann brought his own tank forward and in an astonishing feat destroyed 25

British tanks, 14 half tracks and 14 Bren gun carriers. Wittmann then entered the town where his tank knocked out three Cromwell cruiser tanks – a fourth escaped by reversing out of sight into a side road. He continued down

the hill through the town but when he rounded a corner was confronted by a squadron of Cromwells with at least one Sherman Firefly armed with the powerful 17-pounder gun. Wittmann's Tiger took a hit from the Sherman and was forced to move back through the town. Here he met the surviving Cromwell from the earlier

Above: Michael Wittmann poses on his Tiger after being awarded Swords to add to the Oakleaves of his Knight's Cross.

encounter, which managed to land two hits before it was destroyed.

In subsequent close-range fighting in the town Wittmann's Tiger had a track blown off and he was obliged to bail out. Nine





ONE AGAINST AN ARMY

The battle of Villers-Bocage

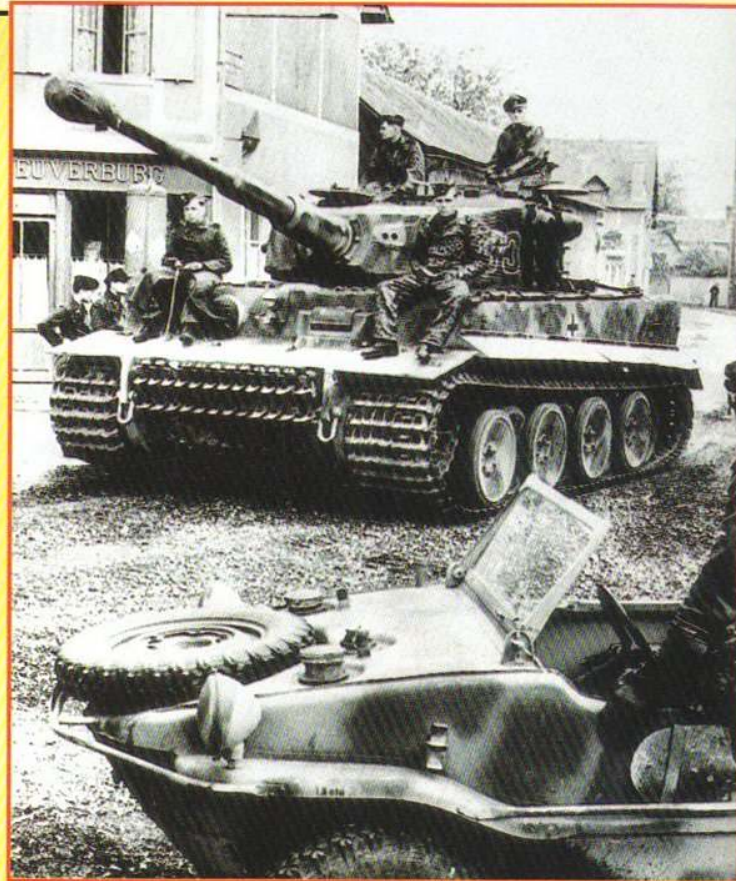
The British movement through Villers-Bocage was intended to take the 7th Armoured Division around the flank of the German Panzer Lehr and 12th SS Panzer Divisions. As the leading British tanks reached Hill 213 behind the German lines, they and their supporting infantry stopped nose to tail down the road, the men dismounting to brew tea and stretch their legs.

Michael Wittmann's Tiger emerged from a small wood to the south of the road. He destroyed the rear tanks of the leading British unit, (A Squadron, 4th County of London Yeomanry), then motored down the column at a range of about 80 metres, shooting up the half tracks and Bren-gun carriers of the 1st Battalion, the Rifle Brigade. The leading British tanks were trapped in the sunken lanes typical of this part

of France, unable to turn or climb the banks on either side of the road.

Wittmann then drove into the village, knocking out 4 CLY's reconnaissance troop and then its headquarters troop. While he was doing this, three more of his Tigers had attacked the British tanks on Hill 213, forcing them to surrender. However, Wittmann was now in trouble, being in a built-up area without infantry support, and coming under increasingly heavy attack. A British anti-tank gun managed to disable the Tiger, and Wittmann and his crew baled out and escaped back to German lines.

Wittmann's action stopped the entire British 7th Armoured Division as it attempted to fight its way around the German defences of Caen, and may have extended the Normandy campaign by several weeks.



Left: One of four Cromwells from the County of London Yeomanry's Headquarters Troop which was knocked out by Wittmann in the village of Villers Bocage.

Above: A Tiger from the 101st passes a schwimmwagen – an amphibious Volkswagen – as they move through a small town in Normandy.

days later he was awarded Swords to his Knight's Cross.

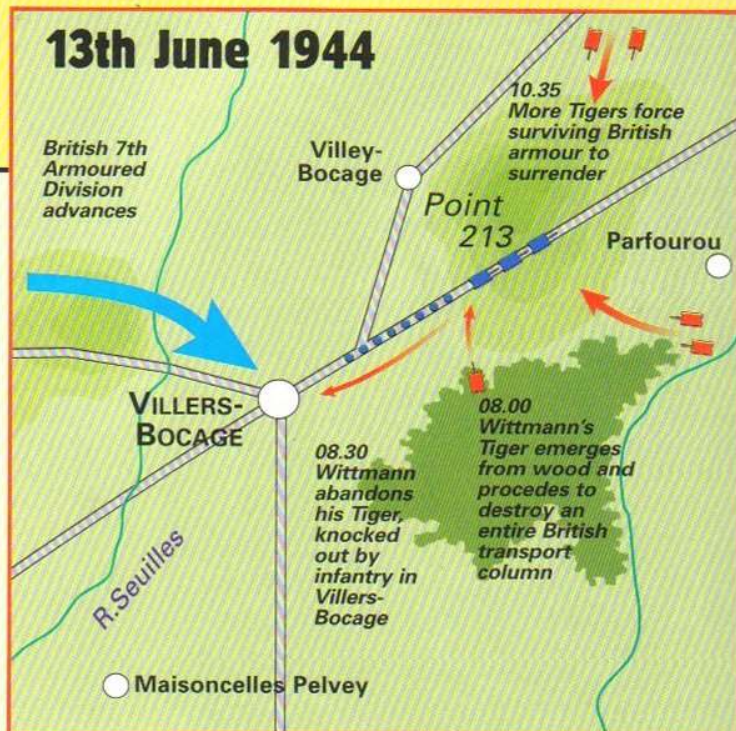
Michael Wittmann died in action south of Caen on 8 August 1944. Initially the kill was thought to have been made by five Shermans and Sherman Firefly tanks which surrounded the lone Tiger, and Wittmann's scalp was claimed by Polish, Canadian and British armoured troops. However, the best evidence indicates that the tank was destroyed by rocket-firing Typhoon ground-attack fighters.

In less than two years commanding a Tiger Wittmann's score reached 138 tanks and assault guns and 132 anti-tank

guns, making him the top tank ace of World War II, and possibly of all time.

After Wittmann's action at Villers-Bocage the already profound British respect for the Tiger developed to new heights. A general if unofficial rule was formulated by British tankers, which went something like "If one Tiger is reported, send four Shermans or four Churchills to deal with it – and expect to lose three of them!"

Right: Villers-Bocage is a small but strategically important village southwest of Caen. The small hill known as Point 213 dominates the flat country around and can be seen for miles.





SA STORM TROOPERS



The brown-shirted stormtroopers of the *Sturmabteilung*, or SA, were the shock troops of the National Socialist movement. Their task was to deal with enemies of the party – violently, if necessary.

THE SA WAS THE paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party. Designed to operate in the rough and tumble that was Bavarian politics in the years after World War I, the members of the *Sturmabteilung* – Assault Detachment – were quite willing to trade hard knocks with political opponents.

As the party grew, so did the SA. By the time that Hitler came to power in 1933, it numbered more than two million men – 20 times the size of the regular army – and under the firebrand leadership of Ernst Röhm it was a potential threat to the Führer himself. But its days of influence were numbered: with the murderous 'Night of the Long Knives' in 1934, the organisation lost its direction and leadership. It was to continue through the war, but was never the force it had been.

EARLY DAYS

The origins of the SA date back to 1921. A fair proportion of the party membership were former soldiers. Most had been members of the right-wing *Freikorps* which fought leftists for control of the streets of Munich. Their only uniform was a crude



Kampfbinde, or swastika armband, worn on the left sleeve.

Hitler imposed some structure onto the party fighters, incorporating them into a single organisation. Originally called the 'Sports and Gymnastics Division' – paramilitary organisations were illegal in Germany under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles – they were soon renamed the SA.

The SA's task was to protect party meetings, disrupt the meetings of any opposing parties, and to march and look impressive at rallies. With the failure of the 1923 Putsch, the SA was declared illegal, but by the late 1920s it was again at the forefront of Nazi expansion.

The SA's increasing power under Ernst Röhm worried both the army and rival Nazis. After the 'Blood Purge' of 1934, which saw the SA leaders killed, power shifted to Himmler's SS.

German rearmament meant that much of the SA's strength was absorbed into the armed forces. The SA remained in existence, but its role had been reduced to providing basic pre-military training for young Germans.



Above: In the early days SA uniforms lacked consistency, members often wearing their old military uniforms, stripped of badges but with the addition of a red, white and black Swastika armband.

Left: Adolf Hitler stands surrounded by his faithful followers: young brownshirts attending the NSDAP's Führerschule, or leadership school. Most have the rank of Scharführer or Oberscharführer.



SA badges and insignia, clockwise from top left: an other-ranks kepi, an SA song book, a 1933 pattern dagger, a medical collar patch from the 7th Jägerstandarte, an SA belt, a commemorative badge from the 1931 Brunswick SA rally, an SA Kampfbinde (armband), a 1929 Nuremberg rally badge, and a Westphalian SA Sports badge (worn on the front of a sports singlet).



Above: SA Stabschef Ernst Röhm works in his palatial office. Röhm was a former army officer who in 10 years built the SA up from a band of street thugs to a two-million-strong force with ambitions to replace the German army.

Right: Senior SA officers march through the streets of Nuremberg on their way to a meeting. By the 1930s the original simple SA brownshirt had evolved into a range of uniform clothing for all occasions.



Below: Once the Nazis came to power, the SA was unleashed on their foes. Here a storm-trooper stands guard over communists, arrested in a night raid. Most will be sent to concentration camps.



BROWN SHIRTS

The Brownshirt uniform came into being in 1924. Hitler, always alive to the effects of propaganda and always ready to make a visual impact, was well aware of the benefits of an easily distinguished appearance. He had also seen how effective Mussolini's Fascist Blackshirts had been in Italy.

However, the choice of brown shirts was more by chance than by design. Gerhard Rossbach was a former *Freikorps* leader and one of the most influential of the early SA leaders. In 1924 he discovered a large stock of surplus Imperial Army tropical shirts, and bought them for the movement.

Once he had been released from Landsberg prison, Adolf Hitler decided that these would be the

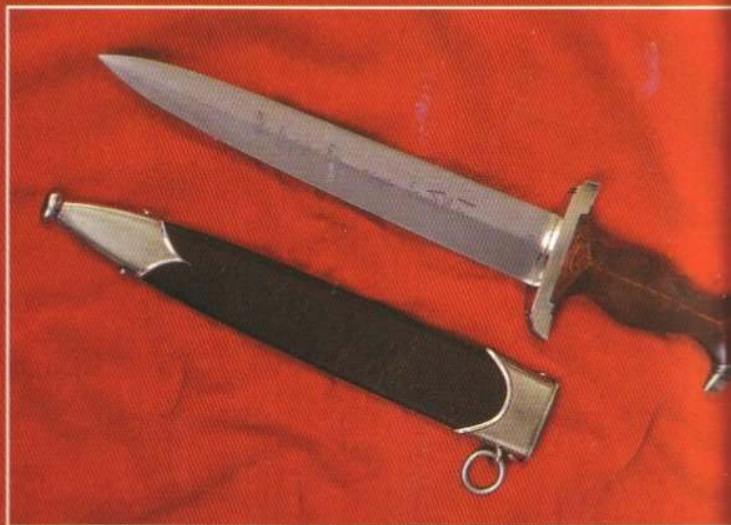
basis of the new SA uniform, and ordered kepis, ties, and breeches to complete the ensemble.

In November 1926, the SA began using *Kragenspiegel* or collar patches to denote rank (left collar) and unit (right collar). They were in the local State colours, indicating which region the unit came from: black and white for Berlin, red and white for Hamburg, blue and white for Munich and so on.

The collar patches also carried specialist insignia. These included those for aviation units, as well as for *Jäger* (light infantry), medical, pioneer, naval, and mountain units.

Cuff titles were used where units had been honoured with the name of a Nazi 'martyr'.

Below: SA and SS service daggers, or *Dienstdolch*, were introduced in 1933 by the SA's interim Chief of Staff, *Obergruppenführer* von Krausser. Based on a Swiss-German dagger style dating back to the 15th century, the SA daggers were issued in huge numbers. Less common were a number of special presentation versions. This is a rare Röhm dagger, distributed in February 1934 to senior SS men by SA Stabschef Ernst Röhm. Engraved on the blade is the inscription *In Herzlicher Kameradschaft, Ernst Röhm* (In heartfelt comradeship, Ernst Röhm). Five months later Röhm and the senior SA leadership were dead, purged by the SS in the 'Night of the Long Knives', and many of the recipients of the dagger had the inscription erased.





Above: The brownshirt worn by a *scharführer* (NCO) of *Jägerstandarte 3 Dietrich Eckart*. The metal gorget was worn by standard bearers. Named after one of the founders of the Nazi movement, the unit was given the title by Hitler in 1937.

Below: Insignia of SA Standarten 137, based in Westphalia. The unit was named after Ludwig Knickmann, an early Nazi fighter. He died in 1923 during the Allied occupation of the Ruhr, drowning while trying to swim a river to escape from a Belgian patrol.



Above: The SA stressed sports as an important part of training. Members of the SA and the NSDAP competed for the SA Sports Badge at official meetings, and officials wore the insignia of the SA Sports Badge Association.

Below: This tunic belonged to SA Oberguppenführer (General) Wilhelm Helfer. A World War I veteran, he took part in the 1923 Putsch, and was the 14th holder of the 'Blood Order', seen here on the right breast pocket. On the left pocket are the Black Wound Badge (left), War Merit Cross in Silver (bottom), 1931 Brunswick Rally Badge (right) and the NSDAP Gold Party Badge of Honour (top).



A Z

OF THE THIRD REICH

Barbarossa

Chosen by Hitler as the code name for the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, replacing the rather pedestrian 'Operation Fritz' selected by German Army planners. Named after the Holy Roman emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1123-1190), (so-called because of his red beard), who had waged war in Asia Minor.

Operation Barbarossa was the largest invasion in history, with German forces alone comprising some 3,200,000 men. Seventeen Panzer divisions and 12 motorised divisions with 3,350 tanks formed the spearhead, followed by 91 infantry divisions. A further 31 divisions were held in reserve. Eighteen Finnish, 14

Rumanian and two Hungarian divisions also took part. The invasion was supported by more than 7,000 artillery pieces and nearly 2,000 warplanes.

The plan called for four major thrusts into the vast expanse of Soviet territory: in the south through the Ukraine towards Crimea and the Caucasus, in the north towards Leningrad, and spearheaded by two powerful panzer groups, two arms of a mighty pincer in the centre, towards Kiev and Kharkov and through Minsk to Moscow. The aim was to destroy the Soviet armies in the west, capture the USSR's major cities, and secure a line from Archangel in the north to Astrakhan in the south.



See also Hitler's Battles

Issue 11: Barbarossa

Issue 14: Stalingrad

Issue 27: Climax in the East

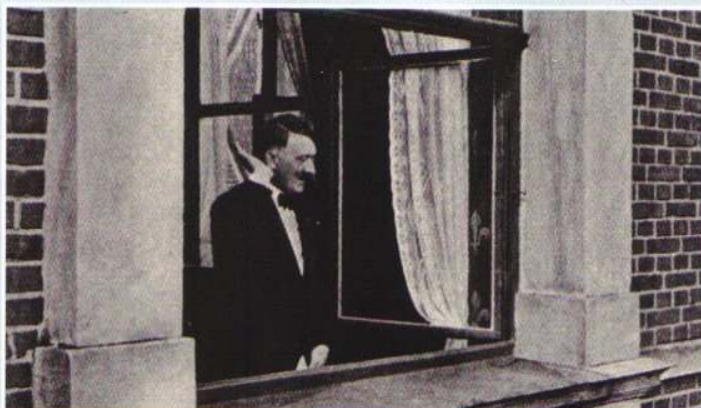
Above: German infantry moves into battle on the Russian front. The army was supported by more than 2,000 aircraft, including large numbers of Stuka dive bombers.

Bayreuth

An annual season of musical entertainment devoted to the works of Richard Wagner. Wagner was the Führer's favourite composer, thanks to his well-documented anti-Semitic views and his romantic celebration of German myths and nationalism. Hitler had been an honoured guest at Haus Wahnfried, the Wagner family home, long before he came to power. Held in Bayreuth, Bavaria, the festival was originally set up by the Wagner family, but under Hitler it was given a large subsidy and complete tax exemption. It

became an annual National Socialist event during the Third Reich. Despite the constraints of the war, the festival kept going up to 1944, with Nazi propaganda making much of the fact that the audience was now largely made up from convalescent soldiers, and ordinary workers. It was revived after the war.

Right: A dinner-jacketed Adolf Hitler greets opera goers from a window of the Wagner house in Bayreuth. Hitler had long been a friend of the family.



Beck, Ludwig (1880-1944)

German general and key conspirator in the 20th of July Plot. Born at Biebricht near Wiesbaden, he rose through the Reichswehr to become Chief of the General Staff between 1935 and 1938. He resigned over the take-over of Czechoslovakia – not for moral reasons, rather because

he felt that the Army was unprepared for the war which he thought might follow. Beck was seen as a possible head of state after Hitler had been killed. After the failure of plot he made two unsuccessful attempts at suicide, and at his request a sergeant gave him the coup de grace.

Right: Ludwig Beck, the senior army General who would have been the leader of Germany had the bomb plot succeeded.

See also Inside the Third Reich

Issue 7: Hitler's opponents

See also Hitler's Horrors

Issue 26: 20th of July revenge



'Beefsteak' Nazis

Although there were many committed Nazis who truly believed in the National Socialist creed, as many and probably

many more Germans joined the party out of self-interest or simply because it was the thing to do. Beefsteak Nazis were a

different breed, however, since they were generally former Communists and Socialists who joined the Nazis out of political

expediency. Their nickname came from the fact that "like steak, they were brown on the outside and red on the inside".

Beer Hall Putsch

Bavaria in the years after World War I was a political ferment, with the ever-present threat of revolution from the right or left. The Beer-Hall Putsch in November 1923 was a premature attempt by the Nazis to seize power in Munich. It began when Hitler and a small group of Nazis took control of a political meeting in the Burgerbrau Keller on November 8 and ended with a march on the centre of government the following day. The police used force to halt the march and 16 Nazis were killed by gunfire. Several prominent

Nazis were wounded – among them Hitler and Göring. Hitler went into hiding but was later arrested, tried and imprisoned. The bloodstained swastika banner carried during the Putsch later became known as the *Blutfahne* or 'Blood Banner', and became one of the holiest relics of the Nazi movement.

Right: Many of the Nazis who took part in the Munich Putsch were members of the Freikorps – right-wing ex-service associations who had been formed to fight socialists after World War I



Bekennniskirche (Confessional Church)

Protestant theologians opposed to Hitler. In spite of the strong anti-Christian stance which permeated their ideology, the Nazis sought to use the Church on coming to power. The German Christian movement appointed a 'National Bishop' to remould the Protestant churches of northern Germany the into the Nazi image. The *Bekennniskirche* was essentially a resistance organisation, whose main aim

was to defend the integrity and independence of the church from state intervention. Prominent members of the *Bekennniskirche* included Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Right: Dietrich Bonhoeffer was arrested in 1943 and executed in 1945. WWI U-boat ace Martin Niemöller (far right) survived seven years in concentration camps for opposition to Hitler.



Belsen (Bergen-Belsen)

Located south of the small towns of Bergen and Belsen, about 16 km north-west of Celle, this was originally a camp for Soviet POWs, many of whom were killed or died of disease.

Bergen-Belsen became an internment camp in 1943, the several thousand prominent Jewish prisoners being held as possible bargaining chips to exchange for German prisoners held by the Allies. It was converted to a full-scale concentration camp in December 1944, under the command of Joseph Kramer, the 'Beast of Belsen'. Kramer had previously served at Auschwitz-Birkenau and at Natzweiler.

Belsen was not an extermination camp, but so harsh was the regime instigated by Kramer that thousands of its inmates died from disease and starvation. Already grim conditions were made worse by the fact that it became a

Right: When the British liberated Bergen-Belsen, they found so many corpses that the only way to bury them was to move the mass of bodies by bulldozer.

collection camp for sick prisoners from other sites, and at the end of the war its population was swollen by prisoners evacuated on death marches from camps closer to the front. Overcrowding and poor sanitation led to a typhus epidemic – as many as 35,000 may have died in the first two months of 1945.

Belsen was liberated by the British in April 1945. They found some 60,000 prisoners, most of whom were seriously ill, and thousands of unburied corpses. Over 10,000 were too far gone for help and died after liberation. Kramer was executed in November 1945.

Right: The British were so shocked by what they found at Belsen that they forced the SS guards at riflepoint to help clean up the camp. Typhus was rife, and to avoid its spread the whole camp was burned down.



See also Hitler's Horrors

Issue 1: Medical experiments

Issue 4: Concentration Camps

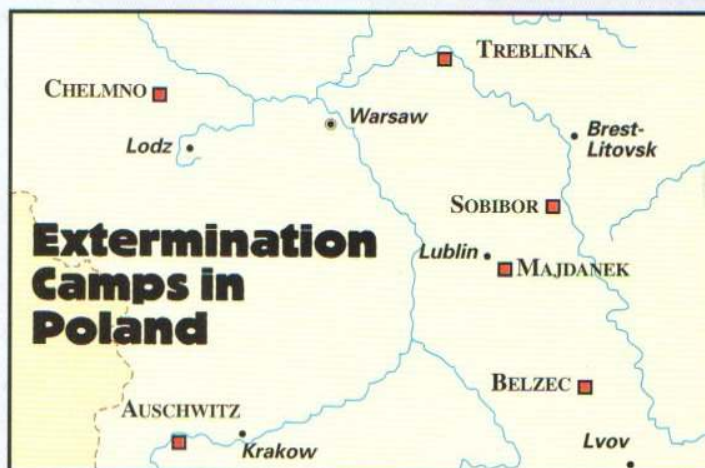
Issue 6: Bergen-Belsen

Belzec (Beltzec)

One of three extermination camps set up in the Lublin district of Poland. Originally a slave labour camp where Jews were forced to build fortifications along the border between German- and Soviet-occupied Poland, it was turned into a killing centre late in 1941, along with Sobibor and Majdanek. Gassing began in March 1942 with the implementation of *Aktion Reinhard* – the plan to liquidate the entire Jewish population of Poland. Initially killing was undertaken in a sealed shack using the fumes from a diesel engine operated by

Unterscharführer Heckenboldt. Zyklon-B (prussic acid) was introduced in August 1942 and mass murder became faster and more efficient. Most of the camp's 600,000 victims were Polish Jews, though Jews from Germany, Austria, Bohemia, Moravia were also sent to Belzec, as were a few hundred Roma (Gypsies). Killing stopped in December 1942, and the camp was dismantled in July 1943.

Right: Belzec was one of the six camps set up in Poland whose primary function was the extermination of Europe's Jews.

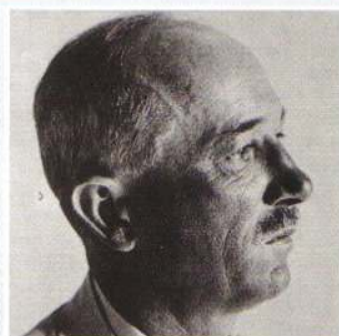


Benes, Eduard (1884-1948)

Czech statesman who along with Thomas Masaryk founded the Czech republic after the break up of the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1918. Benes fought to keep his country free from Nazi control. He attended the Munich meeting in 1938, where Hitler violently abused him for the supposed ill-treatment of Sudeten Germans – the pretext for Germany's

annexation of the territory and the later gobbling up of the rest of Czech territory. Benes resigned the Presidency of Czechoslovakia after signing the Munich Pact in October 1938. During the war he was President of the Czech Government in exile. After the war he again entered politics but was ousted in a Communist election coup d'etat.

Right: Eduard Benes was a Czech nationalist who was partly responsible for the establishment of the modern state of Czechoslovakia. However, in spite of inveterate opposition to Hitler and the Nazis, he was unable to stop the piecemeal seizure of Czech territory in the years before the opening of World War II.



Berchtesgaden

Small German town in the mountains of south-east Bavaria, close to the Austrian border. Berchtesgaden was the site of the Berghof, the Alpine chalet-style retreat built for Hitler. The original building, Haus Wachenfeld, had been rented by Hitler in the 1920s. He later bought the house with the royalties from sales of *Mein Kampf*. The complex was massively expanded over the years, with a spectacular 'Eagle's Nest' built on a peak high above the valley. It was eventually surrounded by five concentric rings of security and fortification,

manned by a garrison of 20,000 Waffen-SS troops whose sole task was to guard Hitler and his senior Nazi visitors. Life at the Berghof in the summer was a model of petit bourgeois comfort with cream teas, home movies, domestic pets and country walks. An invitation to visit was a good sign of one's standing in the Nazi hierarchy. Berchtesgaden was heavily bombed by the RAF and USAAF at the end of the war.

Right: Hitler looks out on to the Obersalzberg from the alpine retreat he had maintained at Berchtesgaden since the 1920s.



Bernadotte of Wisborg, Count Folke

Swedish Red Cross official who at the end of the war was approached by Heinrich Himmler as an intermediary for an armistice between Germany and the Western Allies.

Earlier, as a gesture of good faith, Himmler had discussed the transfer of the administration of

concentration camps to the Red Cross and the release of women from Ravensbrück.

Bernadotte was killed by Jewish terrorists in Jerusalem in September 1948, while attempting to negotiate an armistice between Jews and Arabs.

Count Folke Bernadotte was descended from one of Napoleon's marshals who had ascended to the throne of Sweden. He met with Himmler at the Swedish consulate at Lübeck, where the Reichsführer offered to surrender the German armies of the west to Eisenhower.



Bernhard, Operation

One of the more bizarre of Germany's wartime plans, Operation Bernhard involved the forgery of vast quantities of British and US currency in an attempt to damage the Allied economy through inflation. The

plan was devised by SS officer Alfred Helmut Naujocks, an 'intellectual thug' who had a history of bizarre and dirty operations for his Nazi masters. The paper dollar and pound currency was produced by expert

forgers and engravers - most of whom were concentration camp inmates. The counterfeit notes were handled, folded and randomly numbered in pencil to give them an authentic used look. Naujocks knew that the forgeries

were perfect when a £5 note was passed as authentic by a Swiss-based Bank of England employee. However, there was no means of getting the notes into circulation, and the plan was never put into effect.

Birkenau

Also known as Auschwitz II and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Largest of all the extermination camps, and main killing centre for the Auschwitz complex, it was located a couple of kilometres west of the original camp at Auschwitz. It was also one of the largest concentration and labour camps in the German camp system. Located in the Birkenau woods, construction began in 1941, and large-scale gassing operations began in January 1942. However, the first use of Zyklon-B had already taken place at Birkenau in late 1941, with the mass extermination of Russian prisoners-of-war. Several hundred POWs were killed simultaneously in two old farm buildings which had been made air tight. The bodies were burned in open pits. As the 'Final Solution' accelerated, four large gas chambers and crematoria were built between March and June 1943. Birkenau had its own railway siding disguised as a conventional railway station for



Above: camp huts fade away into the distance at Birkenau. At its height, Auschwitz II held as many as 80,000 prisoners, most being forced to work until they died.

off-loading transports of Jews and other deportees. By the time murders ceased at the end of 1944 more than one million people - Jews, gypsies, Russians, Poles and others - had been killed in the camp.



Above: Hungarian Jews arrive at Birkenau in the summer of 1944. They are undergoing the selection process in which an SS officer decides if they will live - or go straight to the gas chamber.

See also The Holocaust

Issue 1: Selected to die

Issue 2: Death factory

See also Nazi Horrors

Issue 3: Dachau

KMS Bismarck

Originally laid down in 1936, the KMS *Bismarck* was supposed to be a 35,000 ton battleship, though she displaced over 42,000 tons when launched, and at full load exceeded 50,000 tons. Larger than any contemporary British or American capital ship, and armed with eight 38-cm (15-inch) guns, *Bismarck* posed a major threat to Britain's Atlantic supply lines. However her only combat cruise was in May 1941, when she set sail from Norway with the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* in company. The two German ships sank the veteran Royal Navy battlecruiser HMS *Hood* off Iceland, but the Kriegsmarine's triumph was quickly avenged by the British. A

combination of intelligence intercepts, skilled seamanship and good luck allowed the British fleet to track down and shadow *Bismarck*. Air attacks slowed her down and finally on May 27 1941 the battleships HMS *King George V* and *Rodney* pounded her into a burning hulk. Though the coup

de grace was long believed to have been delivered by torpedoes from the cruiser HMS *Dorsetshire*, when the remains of *Bismarck* were discovered by a submersible in 1989 the damage to the hull suggested that the German battleship's crew had scuttled her.

Below: The brand-new battleship Bismarck heads out for trials in the Baltic in the summer of 1940. The powerful vessel was considerably larger than originally claimed by the Kriegsmarine, though much of the design was based on Germany's last World War I dreadnoughts.



See also Hitler's War Machine

Issue 1: Wolfpacks

Issue 2: Battle of the R. Plate

Issue 5: Kriegsmarine

Blackshirts

The early SS was a small but elite organisation within the much larger SA, to which the vast majority of the Nazi party belonged in the years before Hitler came to power. Originally clad in similar brownshirt uniforms, but with a black kepi, the SS switched to an all-black uniform between 1932 and 1933. The SS immediately became known as 'Blackshirts' just as the SA were known as 'Brownshirts'. Apart from occasional use as

ceremonial dress the black uniforms began to be replaced by 1939, but many members of the *Allgemeine SS* continued with the old style uniforms until the end of the war – hence the alternative name of 'Black SS' to distinguish them from the military units of the *Waffen SS*.

An SS honour guard attends Hitler at a party rally in 1933, soon after the organization adopted the all-black uniform.



Blitzkrieg

Key to German successes in the early years of World War II, Blitzkrieg or 'lightning war' was the nickname given to the Wehrmacht's fast-moving, mechanised deep penetration tactics. Based in the small-unit infiltration tactics used by German Army assault troopers in the last year of World War I – which worked best when the troopers avoided clashing with an enemy head on, instead avoiding his strength and attacking his weaknesses. To this was added the increased mobility offered by the internal combustion engine and the possibility of controlling widely separated forces by means of radio communications. Although the word Blitzkrieg conjures up visions of huge numbers of tanks pouring over borders in an unstoppable flood, in fact the Wehrmacht was often outnumbered by its enemies. It was actually the speed and control with which the Germans moved – punching through weak points in enemy defences and running rampage through his rear lines of communication – which was crucial to German success in Poland, France and in



Above: It was the speed with which they moved and the tactics which they used which made German panzer forces so devastating in the Blitzkrieg.

the invasion of the USSR. The effect of Blitzkrieg was enhanced by the extensive close-support provided by the Luftwaffe, particularly the pinpoint accurate dive bomb attacks and devastating psychological effect of screaming Ju-87 Stukas.



Above: German infantry cross the Meuse in 1940. Their first task will be to build pontoon bridges, which will allow the panzers to rip through northern France, outflanking the Maginot line.

See also Hitler's Battles
Issue 1: Blitzkrieg Poland
Issue 4: Breakthrough at Sedan
See also Hitler's War Machine
Issue 3: Junkers Ju-87 Stuka

Blomberg, Werner von (1878 - 1946)

Minister of War and supreme commander of the armed forces in the early years of the Nazi regime. Known as the 'Rubber Lion' to younger officers, thanks to his fine martial appearance but somewhat flexible principles, he nevertheless led the drive for re-armament after Hitler came to power. Blomberg fell foul of the Nazis when Hitler decided he needed more direct control of the armed forces. He was forced to

resign in February 1938 after a police investigation (almost certainly inspired by Heydrich's sinister SD) showed that the General's second wife, his former secretary, had a 'questionable past' – i.e. had performed in pornographic films and had been a prostitute. Blomberg's resignation came at a time when the Nazis were purging General Staff conservatives, often on trumped-up or completely

fabricated charges. Hitler assumed the post of commander in chief himself, which allowed the dictator to take much more direct control of the armed forces. Blomberg died in prison awaiting trial at Nuremberg.

Right: von Blomberg (centre) attends Wehrmacht manoeuvres with Hitler and Army chief of staff von Fritsch. Both generals will be brought down by Gestapo plots.



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